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Expulsion of the Palestinians

Nur Masalha

The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948

Institute for Palestine Studies

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1882–1948

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PREFACE

Nur Masalha

Preface to the eBook

Expulsion of the Palestinians

The year 2012 marks the sixty-fourth anniversary of the *Nakba* , the catastrophic uprooting of the Palestinians and the dismemberment and de-Arabization of Palestine in 1948. The name “Palestine” was wiped off the map. Some five hundred villages and towns disappeared; markers of the Palestinian presence on the land that had survived the Crusades were obliterated to make way for a new militarized European immigrant-settler community. This is also the twentieth anniversary of the publication of my book *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, which traced the development of the concept of the “transfer” of Palestinians by the Zionist leadership in the decades before 1948. The Institute for Palestine Studies, in recognition of the continuing importance and relevance of the subject, has chosen this occasion to release my work in eBook form.

“Transfer” was the main euphemism (there were others) used by Zionists for the expulsion of Palestinians from their country in order to create the would-be Jewish state. Transfer was essential to the Zionist project, as it was impossible to create a Jewish majority in Palestine without somehow removing the indigenous population. Transfer rhetoric was embedded in the racist and dehumanizing European Zionist colonial perception that the “Land of Israel” — Palestine — is a Jewish birthright belonging exclusively to the Jewish people. Consequently, it treated Palestinian Arabs as “strangers” and squatters who could either accept Jewish sovereignty over the land or leave.

Drawing on a range of sources, especially primary Hebrew-language Zionist archival material, *Expulsion of the Palestinians* documents the Zionist leaders’ preoccupation with “transfer,” especially from the mid-1930s onwards. The most important Zionist leaders — Theodor Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, Chaim Weizmann, Berl Katznelson, Moshe Sharett, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, and others — all advocated transfer. These advocates of transfer saw nothing immoral about the idea, and even transfer’s Zionist critics opposed it on political and practical, not moral, grounds. For them all, the post-World War I population exchange of Greeks and Turks served as a convenient precedent for Palestine. Uprooting Palestinians and

“transferring” them to Arab countries — Jordan, Syria, and Iraq were most often suggested —was depicted as a mere relocation from one district to another. Since Palestinians allegedly had few real ties (and no rights) to Palestine, Zionist leaders rationalized, the uprooted would be just as content outside the “Land of Israel.”

“Transfer” and the Zionist denial of the Palestinians’ national identity and right to self-determination were inextricably linked. Transfer advocates asserted that Palestinians were not a distinct people tied to their homeland but mere “Arabs,” an “Arab encampment,” or an “Arab population” that happened to reside in the Land of Israel. If Palestinians did not constitute a distinct nation, were not integral to the country, and lacked historical ties to it, then they could be transferred to other Arab countries without prejudice. And if Palestinians were merely a small local portion of the larger Middle Eastern Arab population, then their political representatives could be bypassed. Zionists therefore dealt over the Palestinians’ heads with Arab leaders, for example with King Abdullah of Transjordan in pursuit of the so-called “Jordanian option.” Zionist discourse referred, and continues to refer, to vast Arab territories where Palestinians should dwell with the rest of the Arab people.

Transfer remained theoretical until the great wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the mid-1930s, and the British endorsement in 1937 of the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states made establishing a Jewish state with a Jewish majority a realistic possibility. From this point on, transfer occupied a central position in the Zionist movement’s strategic thinking and the practical planning of the Jewish Agency (the effective Yishuv government led by David Ben-Gurion) to “solve” the land and demographic “problems” facing the creation of a Jewish state.

Although transfer as the preferred Zionist “solution” to the “Arab question” was constant until 1948, its envisaged modalities changed over the years. From the mid-1930s specific transfer plans were produced by Yishuv officials and organs of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund. The transfer mindset also massively informed the Haganah’s military plans which, when applied with brute force in 1947-48, led to the expulsion of

three-quarters of a million Palestinians and the destruction of Mandatory Palestinian society.

Memories of pre-1948 life and the shock, humiliation, and suffering wrought by the mass displacements of 1948 (and 1967) continue to shape Palestinian politics. The Nakba as a continuing trauma occupies a central place in the Palestinian psyche. It drastically changed the lives of the Palestinians at both the individual and national levels and continues to structure Palestinians' lives and to suffuse Palestinian political culture, education, popular arts, poetry, and cinema.

It has also led to the consolidation of a distinct and resistant Palestinian identity. Today, more than six decades after the Nakba, some two-thirds of the eleven million Palestinians are refugees or internally displaced persons. The Israeli state continues to colonize, subjugate, dehumanize, and dispossess the indigenous people of Palestine. With millions still living under Israeli military occupation or in exile, the Nakba is a pervasive state of being.

Amidst the current deep crises facing Palestine, the sixty-fourth anniversary of the Nakba should be an opportunity for commemoration of and reflection on the past. The importance of historical truth-telling in scholarly engagement with the painful past is essential to achieving reconciliation in Palestine-Israel. I am grateful to the Institute for Palestine Studies for making my book available in this new format for a new generation of readers. Exposing the truth about the past — a moral imperative — can only help to keep the dream for peace with justice alive.

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Introduction

The Zionist concept of "transfer"—a euphemism denoting the organized removal of the indigenous population of Palestine to neighboring countries

—is a prickly and even explosive subject that myriad researchers and writers focusing on Palestine have avoided for obvious reasons. From the outset, however, this concept has occupied a central position in the strategic thinking of the leadership of the Zionist movements and the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) as a solution to the "Arab question" in Palestine. Indeed, the idea of transfer is as old as the early Zionist colonies in Palestine and the rise of political Zionism. It can be said to be the logical outgrowth of the ultimate goal of the Zionist movement, which was the establishment of a Jewish state through colonization and land acquisition—in other words, through a radical ethnoreligious-demographic transformation of a country, the population of which had been almost entirely Arab at the start of the Zionist venture.

While the desire among Zionists to solve the "Arab question"—or baldly stated, to be rid of the native Palestinian population—remained a constant until the "miraculous simplification" of the problem during the 1948 war, the envisaged modalities of transfer changed over the years according to circumstances. Thus, the wishful belief in Zionism's early years that the native population could be "spirited across the borders," in the words of political Zionism's founder Theodor Herzl, or that they would simply "fold their tents and slip away," to use the formulation of the Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill, soon gave way to more realistic assessments. These assessments necessitated strategies and planning that produced a series of specific plans, generally involving Transjordan, Syria, or Iraq. As of the late 1930s, they included proposals for agrarian legislation and citizenship restrictions designed to encourage the Arabs to "transfer voluntarily."

It should not be imagined that the concept of transfer was held only by maximalists or extremists within the Zionist movement. On the contrary, it was embraced by almost all shades of opinion, from the Revisionist right to the Labor left. Virtually every member of the Zionist pantheon of founding fathers and important leaders supported it and advocated it in one form or another, from Chaim Weizmann and Vladimir Jabotinsky to David Ben-Gurion and Menahem Ussishkin. Supporters of transfer included such moderates as the "Arab appeaser" Moshe Shertok and the socialist Arthur Ruppin, founder of Brit Shalom, a movement advocating equal rights for

Arabs and Jews. More importantly, transfer proposals were put forward by the Jewish Agency itself, in effect the government of the Yishuv.

In light of the massive exodus of Arabs from Palestine in 1948, the issue of transfer assumes crucial importance. This study sets out to explore the historical links between Zionist adherence to the strategic goal of establishing a Jewish homeland (state) in Palestine and the advocacy of the politico-strategic concept of transfer. It will analyze the notion against the background of Zionist ideological principles and doctrines such as *'Avodah 'Ivrit* (Hebrew Labor), *Adamah 'Ivrit* (Hebrew Land), and *Kibbush Ha'adamah* (Land Conquest). It would appear that the intensification of efforts to implement those doctrines in the 1930s contributed to a consolidation of the transfer proposals into official Yishuv positions. The study will trace the evolution of the concept of transfer and describe a number of unpublished plans put forward in the thirties and the forties within the context of unfolding events. Finally, the book will discuss the realization of Zionist goals during the 1948 war, with special reference to the leadership's discussions of transfer rather than to the military dimension per se.

A deterministic research approach to the subject of transfer is bound to be misleading. The Yishuv leadership's role in the 1948 Arab exodus was influenced by the war circumstances and the local balance of forces. Nonetheless, the conduct during that war of the Haganah, the Yishuv's military forces, can not adequately be comprehended within the narrow confines of military circumstances. It can only be explained against the above-mentioned historical background, particularly the transfer plans of the 1930s and 1940s. These plans, although they do not all carry the same weight and must be situated in their various contexts, show clearly the transfer intent and mind-set informing the entire Zionist Yishuv.

The work is divided into five parts. Chapter 1 deals with the Zionist transfer ideas from 1882 until 1936, with particular emphasis on the proposals of those who played a leading role in the establishment of the State of Israel. Chapter 2 discusses the partition and transfer recommendations of the Royal (Peel) Commission of 1937 and the intensive Zionist debate that surrounded these concepts, while chapter 3 outlines transfer proposals and

preparations undertaken by the Jewish Agency in the wake of the Peel Commission Report. Chapter 4 focuses on the proposals that emerged during World War II and immediately thereafter. The last chapter concentrates on the Palestine exodus of 1948.

This work is largely based on declassified Israeli state and private archival material, supplemented by British archival documents and, to a lesser extent, Arabic sources, as well as a range of secondary sources that have become available in recent years. While sifting through archival material in Israel, I found that many of the official Zionist documents referring to the subject, particularly those dealing with the Palestinian exodus of 1948, are still classified. A definitive and comprehensive study regarding the extent of premeditated Zionist planning of transfer must await their opening.

CHAPTER ONE

Zionist Transfer Ideas and Proposals, 1882–1936

When in the late nineteenth century Zionism arose as a political force calling for the colonization of Palestine and the "gathering of all Jews," little attention was paid to the fact that Palestine was already populated. Indeed, the Basle Program adopted at the First Zionist Congress, which launched political Zionism in 1897, made no mention of a Palestinian native population when it spelled out the movement's objective: "the establishment of a publicly and legally secured home in Palestine for the Jewish people."

Moreover, in the early years of their efforts to secure support for their enterprise, the Zionists propagated in the West the idea of "a land without a people for a people without a land," a slogan coined by Israel Zangwill, a prominent Anglo-Jewish writer often quoted in the British press as a spokesman for Zionism and one of the earliest organizers of the Zionist movement in Britain. Even as late as 1914, Chaim Weizmann, who was to become the first president of Israel and who, along with Theodor Herzl and

David Ben-Gurion, was one of the three men most responsible for turning the Zionist dream into reality, stated:

> In its initial stage, Zionism was conceived by its pioneers as a movement wholly depending on mechanical factors: there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary, then, than to fit the gem into the ring, to unite this people with this country? The owners of the country [the Turks] must, therefore, be persuaded and convinced that this marriage is advantageous, not only for the [Jewish] people and for the country, but also for themselves. [1]

Neither Zangwill nor Weizmann intended these demographic assessments in a literal fashion. They did not mean that there were no people in Palestine, but that there were no people worth considering within the framework of the notions of European supremacy that then held sway. In this connection, a comment by Weizmann to Arthur Ruppin, the head of the colonization department of the Jewish Agency, is particularly revealing. When asked by Ruppin about the Palestinian Arabs, Weizmann replied: “The British told us that there are there some hundred thousands negroes [Kushim] and for those there is no value.” [2] Zangwill himself spelled out the actual meaning of his slogan with admirable clarity in 1920:

> If Lord Shaftesbury was literally inexact in describing Palestine as a country without a people, he was essentially correct, for there is no Arab people living in intimate fusion with the country, utilising its resources and stamping it with a characteristic impress: there is at best an Arab encampment. [3]

Despite such statements, however, the Zionists from the outset were well aware that not only were there people on the land, but that people were there in large numbers. [4] Zangwill, who had visited Palestine in 1897 and come face-to-face with the demographic reality, acknowledged in 1905 in a speech to a Zionist group in Manchester that “Palestine proper has already its inhabitants. The pashalik of Jerusalem is already twice as thickly populated as the United States, having fifty-two souls to the square mile,

and not 25 per cent of them Jews..." [5] Abundant references to the Palestinian population in early Zionist texts show clearly that from the beginning of Zionist settlement in Palestine—which Zionist historiography dates to the arrival of the members of the Russian Bilu Society in 1882—the Palestinian Arabs were far from being an "unseen" or "hidden" presence. [6] Moreover, recent studies have shown that Zionist leaders were concerned with what they termed the "Arab problem" (*Habe'ayah Ha'arvit*) or the "Arab question" (*Hashelah Ha'arvit*). [7] As seen in their writings, the attitudes prevailing among the majority of the Zionist groups and settlers concerning the indigenous Palestinian population ranged from indifference and disregard to patronizing superiority. A typical example can be found in the works of Moshe Smilansky, a Zionist writer and Labor leader who immigrated to Palestine in 1890:

> Let us not be too familiar with the Arab fellahin lest our children adopt their ways and learn from their ugly deeds. Let all those who are loyal to the Torah avoid ugliness and that which resembles it and keep their distance from the fellahin and their base attributes. [8]

There were, certainly, those who took exception to such attitudes. Ahad Ha'Am (Asher Zvi Ginzberg), a liberal Russian Jewish thinker who visited Palestine in 1891, published a series of articles in the Hebrew periodical *Hamelitz* that were sharply critical of the ethnocentricity of political Zionism as well as the exploitation of Palestinian peasantry by Zionist colonists. [9] Ahad Ha'Am, who sought to draw attention to the fact that Palestine was not an empty territory and that the presence of another people on the land posed problems, observed that the Zionist "pioneers" believed that "the only language that the Arabs understand is that of force.... [They] behave towards the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, trespass unjustly upon their boundaries, beat them shamefully without reason and even brag about it, and nobody stands to check this contemptible and dangerous tendency." He cut to the heart of the matter when he ventured that the colonists' aggressive attitude towards the native peasants stemmed from their anger "towards those who reminded them that there is still another people in the land of Israel that have been living there and does not intend to leave." [10]

Another early settler, Yitzhaq Epstein, who arrived in Palestine from Russia in 1886, warned not only of the moral implications of Zionist colonization but also of the political dangers inherent in the enterprise. In 1907, at a time when Zionist land purchases in the Galilee were stirring opposition among Palestinian peasants forced off land sold by absentee landlords, Epstein wrote a controversial article entitled "The Hidden Question," in which he strongly criticized the methods by which Zionists had purchased Arab land. In his view, these methods entailing dispossession of Arab farmers were bound to cause political confrontation in the future. [11] Reflected in the Zionist establishment's angry response to Epstein's article [12] are two principal features of mainstream Zionist thought: the belief that Jewish acquisition of land took precedence over moral considerations, and the advocacy of a separatist and exclusionist Yishuv.

Early Transfer Proposals of the Founding Fathers

Zionism's aims in Palestine, its deeply-held conviction that the Land of Israel belonged exclusively to the Jewish people as a whole, and the idea of Palestine's "civilizational barrenness" or "emptiness" against the background of European imperialist ideologies all converged in the logical conclusion that the native population should make way for the newcomers. The idea that the Palestinian Arabs must find a place for themselves elsewhere was articulated early on. Indeed, the founder of the movement, Theodor Herzl, provided an early reference to transfer even before he formally outlined his theory of Zionist rebirth in his *Judenstat* . An 1895 entry in his diary provides in embryonic form many of the elements that were to be demonstrated repeatedly in the Zionist quest for solutions to the "Arab problem"—the idea of dealing with state governments over the heads of the indigenous population, Jewish acquisition of property that would be inalienable, "Hebrew Land" and "Hebrew Labor," and the removal of the native population. Thus, contemplating the transition from a "society of Jews" [13] to statehood, he wrote on 12 June 1895:

> When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us.

> We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country.
>
> The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.
>
> Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us something far more than they are worth.
>
> But we are not going to sell them anything back. [14]

Another early example of the transfer idea's deep roots among the early Zionists is found in a story by Moshe Smilansky in which he recounts a dialogue that took place in 1891 between two pioneers of *Hovevie Tzion* (Lovers of Zion):

> "We should go east, into Transjordan. That would be a test for our movement."
>
> "Nonsense ... isn't there enough land in Judea and Galilee?"
>
> "The land in Judea and Galilee is occupied by the Arabs."
>
> "Well, we'll take it from them."
>
> "How?" (Silence.)
>
> "A revolutionary doesn't ask naive questions."
>
> "Well then, 'revolutionary,' tell us how."
>
> "It is very simple. We'll harass them until they get out ... Let them go to Transjordan."
>
> "And are we going to abandon all of Transjordan?" asks an anxious voice.

> “As soon as we have a big settlement here we’ll seize the land, we’ll become strong, and then we’ll take care of the Left Bank [of the Jordan River]. We’ll expel them from there, too. Let them go back to the Arab countries.” [15]

Israel Zangwill was one of the strongest proponents of transferring the native population out of Palestine. In the same April 1905 talk in Manchester in which he outlined the demographic situation, he went on to draw an obvious conclusion. Given that Palestine was “already twice as thickly populated as the United States,” and given that “not 25 per cent of them [are] Jews,”

> [We] must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the [Arab] tribes in possession as our forefathers did or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedan and accustomed for centuries to despise us. [16]

Zangwill held firm to this idea in the years that followed, couching his arguments for transfer in pragmatic and geopolitical terms. In a conversation during the summer of 1916 with Vladimir Jabotinsky (who later founded Revisionist Zionism, the forerunner of the present-day Likud), Zangwill argued that the removal of Arabs from Palestine to make room for the settlement of Europe’s Jewish masses was a precondition for the fulfillment of Zionism. When Jabotinsky pointed out that the Arabs would never evacuate the land of their birth voluntarily, Zangwill replied that the Zionist enterprise should be part of a new world order in which there could be no place for sentimental argument. [17] At another time, he argued that

> If we wish to give a country to a people without a country, it is utter foolishness to allow it to be the country of two peoples. This can only cause trouble. The Jews will suffer and so will their neighbours. One of the two: a different place must be found either for the Jews or for their neighbours. [18]

While Zangwill was particularly frank in his calls for the removal of the Arab population, others expressed the same ideas in euphemistic, discreetly

formulated terms, stressing the peaceful nature of the operation that would be initiated by Zionist land acquisition and economic incentives.

For example, Arthur Ruppin, a socialist whose pioneering role in promoting Jewish settlement and land acquisition makes him a pivotal figure in Zionism, proposed in a May 1911 memorandum to the Zionist Executive, the executive organ of the Zionist Organization, "a limited population transfer" of the Arab peasants from Palestine to the northern Syrian districts of Aleppo and Homs. [19] Ruppin, who several years later founded the Brit Shalom movement advocating a binational Arab-Jewish state, repeated his proposal for the removal of the Arab *fellahin* to Syria in a letter dated 12 May 1914 to Victor Jacobson, [20] a member of the Zionist Executive and the Zionist Organization's representative in Istanbul (1908–15). Some years later, in 1930, after Ruppin had resigned from Brit Shalom in the wake of the intercommunal disturbances of 1929, he wrote that the dispossession and displacement of Arab farmers was inevitable because

> land is the most vital condition for our settlement in Palestine. But since there is hardly any land which is worth cultivating that is not already being cultivated, it is found that wherever we purchase land and settle it, by necessity its present cultivators are turned away .... In the future it will be much more difficult to purchase land, as sparsely populated land hardly exists. What remains is densely [Arab] populated land. [21]

Another socialist Zionist who supported the transfer idea was Nahman Syrkin, the ideological founder of Socialist Zionism and considered an important influence in the whole range of Yishuv Labor parties since the second decade of the twentieth century. Syrkin's proposal was included in an 1898 pamphlet entitled "The Jewish Question and the Socialist Jewish State," in which he called for the liberation of Palestine from Turkish rule through cooperation with other rebelling nationalities of the Ottoman Empire and for the subsequent evacuation of Palestine's Arab inhabitants. "Palestine," he wrote, "thinly populated, in which the Jews constitute today 10 per cent of the population, must be evacuated for the Jews." [22]

Leon Motzkin, a cofounder of the Zionist Organization and coauthor of the Basle Program, suggested, in a speech at the annual conference of the German Zionists in July 1912, a solution to the Arab "demographic problem" in Palestine. This, he stated, could be found in the wider Arab framework provided that the Palestinians would agree to sell their lands to Jewish colonists and be resettled on land purchased in neighboring Arab provinces. "The fact is," Motzkin stated, "that around Palestine there are extensive areas. It will be easy for the Arabs to settle there with the money that they will receive from the Jews." [23]

The Balfour Declaration of November 1917 assuring Britain's support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine dramatically improved Jewish prospects in Palestine, especially since by then it was virtually certain—given Britain's imminent military conquest of Palestine and the arrangements that already had been made to divide the Ottoman Empire among the Great Powers—that Palestine would become a British protectorate. Thus, whereas the transfer proposals up until then remained largely on the level of talk or wish, with the opportunities offered by the Balfour Declaration they began to take on a more pragmatic, less visionary turn.

This change became clear at the Paris Peace Conference, which opened in January 1919 to dispose of the territories captured from the defeated Hapsburgs and Ottomans during the war. Chaim Weizmann, leading the Zionist Commission that was to put forward Zionist claims, called for the imposition of a British Mandate over a Palestine extending north to the Litani River in what is now Lebanon and east to the Hijaz railway line, which is well east of the Jordan River. It was at that conference, too, that Weizmann called for a Palestine "as Jewish as England is English." [24]

While the transfer or removal of the native population is implicit in such a vision, it remained unspoken in official deliberations at the conference. But another member of the Zionist Commission. Aaron Aaronsohn, did mention it in the corridors of the conference. Aaronsohn, an agronomist, was a member of the Zionist Executive and a director of the Palestine Land Development Company (in Hebrew, Hevrat *Hachsharat Hayishuv*). While working for British intelligence during the war, he had written in the secret

intelligence weekly *Arab Bulletin* of the need to “remove forcibly” Arab tenant farmers from the lands to be purchased from Arab absentee landlords for Zionist colonization. [25] Aaronsohn’s friend William K. Bullitt, a member of the U.S. mission to the Paris Peace Conference, later recalled:

> Many times during the Peace Conference in Paris I joined him [i.e., Aaronsohn] and Dr. Weizmann at a time while both were considering and assessing policies and plans. Aaronsohn’s proposal was the following: While Palestine must be made a Jewish state, the vast valley of Iraq, which is irrigated by the Euphrates and Tigris, should be restored, through the use of planned irrigation, to be the paradise of the world ... and furthermore the Arabs of Palestine should be offered lands there ... to which as many Arabs as possible should be persuaded to emigrate. [26]

The euphoria caused by the issuance of the Balfour Declaration also emboldened certain Zionists to speak more forthrightly about transfer. Israel Zangwill, for example, began to campaign for it openly. In late 1918, he published an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* , a London-based Zionist weekly, in which he stated that the emigration of the Palestinians to Arab countries would lessen their fears of displacement in Palestine. [27] Writing in the *League of Nations Journal* in February 1919, he again insisted that the Palestinians “should be gradually transplanted” in Arab countries. Zangwill’s more public stance can be seen in the publication of his book, *The Voice of Jerusalem* , in 1920. There, he advocated an “Arab exodus” that would be based on “race redistribution” or a “trek like that of the Boers from Cape Colony,” which he advocated as “literally the only ‘way out’ of the difficulty of creating a Jewish State in Palestine.” [28]

Exemplifying once again the recurrent theme in certain Zionist writings of Palestinian cultural “backwardness” as a justification for the population’s removal, he continued:

> We cannot allow the Arabs to block so valuable a piece of historic reconstruction....And therefore we must gently persuade them to “trek.” After all, they have all Arabia with its million square miles....There is no particular reason for the Arabs to cling to these few

kilometers. “To fold their tents” and “silently steal away” is their proverbial habit: let them exemplify it now. [29]

But Zangwill’s public campaign was not without some mishaps. His remarks at a public meeting in 1919 about the Arabs of Palestine—“many are semi-nomad, they have given nothing to Palestine and are not entitled to the rules of democracy” [30]—apparently angered Emir Faisal, who was visiting England at the time. Faisal, the military commander of the Arab revolt against the Ottomans during World War I and at the time the focus of Britain’s plans in the Arab world, referred to Zangwill’s speech in a *Jewish Chronicle* interview on 3 October 1919, emphasizing that Palestine had a deeply-rooted Arab population and could not be transformed into a Jewish state. Zangwill’s remarks apparently embarrassed and angered Chaim Weizmann, who was involved at the time in sensitive negotiations aimed at a Zionist-Arab deal with the Sharifian Emir. [31]

The General Approach toward the Palestinians in the Mandatory Period

At the time the Balfour Declaration was issued, Jews constituted about 10 percent of the population of Palestine, and owned about 2 percent of the land. While Zionist land purchases remained relatively limited during the Mandate period (6 percent until 1948), Jewish immigration into Palestine began eroding the immense numerical superiority of the Palestinians. [32] Growing Arab awareness of Zionist aims in Palestine, reinforced by Zionist calls for unrestricted Jewish immigration and unhindered transfer of Arab lands to exclusive Jewish control, triggered escalating protests and resistance that were eventually to culminate in the peasant-based great Arab Rebellion of 1936–39.

Thus, while the Balfour Declaration and the formal imposition of the British Mandate over Palestine in 1922 considerably raised the likelihood of eventual Jewish statehood, at the same time it was becoming clear that the indigenous inhabitants were clinging to the land with stubborn insistence; demonstrations beginning in the early 1920s against Jewish immigration swept away any illusions that may have remained about the ease of solving the “Arab problem.”

Caution in public pronouncements was therefore essential, not only so as not to antagonize the Arabs, but also out of regard for the British public's sensitivities towards the handling of the "Arab problem"; after all, in addition to promising a national home to the Jews, the Balfour Declaration had promised not to prejudice the rights of the "non-Jewish communities existing in Palestine."

Already at the time of the Balfour Declaration, apprehensions concerning the fate of the "non-Jewish communities" had been voiced in British establishment circles. Edward Montagu, a Jewish cabinet minister at the India Office, had expressed in 1917 his belief that the Zionist drive to create a Jewish state in Palestine would end by "driving out the present inhabitants." [33] Even the enthusiastically pro-Zionist Winston Churchill had written in his review of Palestinian affairs dated 25 October 1919 that "there are the Jews, whom we are pledged to introduce into Palestine, and who take it for granted that the local population will be cleared out to suit their convenience." [34]

Indeed, there are claims that Balfour had actually envisaged such a "solution." In his contribution to a British radio program tribute to Chaim Weizmann in 1964, Lord Boothby, a life-long Zionist and president of the Anglo-Israel Association, told his listeners that "the original Balfour Declaration made provision for the Arabs to be removed elsewhere, more or less." [35] However, in his letter to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* , [36] he did not produce documentary evidence to substantiate his reference to the content of an "original Balfour Declaration," a draft allegedly produced either by the Zionists or the British providing for the removal of the Arabs. At the same time Boothby stuck to his claim: "The original Balfour Declaration was far more clear and specific than the one that was ultimately adopted; and Weizmann wondered, to the end of his days, whether in fact it was not wiser to accept the latter, press for ratification and hope for the best." He added:

> For my part, as a life-long Zionist, I never had any doubt that the creation of a National Home for the Jews must result in the establishment of the State of Israel and that the consequences of this must be faced. I thought, and said long ago, that a steadily increasing

> immigration of Jews from all over the world to a country the size of Wales, without great natural resources, was quite unrealistic unless accompanied by some resettlement of the Arab population. This could, and should, have been carried out between thirty and forty years ago by the British government, on lavish lines, when they had both the power and the money to do it. How, otherwise, could they hope to implement the pledges they had given? [37]

Six weeks later, Lord Boothby wrote again in the *Jewish Observer* and *Middle East Review* (London, 28 February 1964), acknowledging the absence of any written evidence to substantiate his claim, while at the same time sticking to its validity and citing in support a letter Mrs. Weizmann sent to him. Lord Boothby's claim was also supported by Boris Guriel, a senior official of the Weizmann Archives, in Rehovot. [38]

Whether or not Lord Boothby's claims have any validity, the fact remains that the possible impact of Balfour's promise to the Jews on the Arabs of Palestine was a delicate issue from the beginning. As a result, the Western-attuned Labor Zionists were at pains to temper their public utterances regarding the "Arab problem." Israel Zangwill, whose disparaging remarks about the Arabs had already caused difficulty with Emir Faisal, recounts a similar episode in 1917 when "...the Arabs had read my article in *Pearson's Magazine* , in which I pointed out the difficulty in the existence of the Arab population in the Land of Israel . . and this caused much agitation among them. Now the Zionists asked me not to raise the question and I agreed for the time being." [39]During the twenties, the Ahdut Ha'avodah party, then the dominant Zionist grouping in the Yishuv (which would merge with the Hapo'el Hatza'ir to form Mapai in 1930), adopted a policy line of "avoiding all mention of the Arab question in party manifestos and policy statements." [40]

Despite all the efforts at public discretion, Zionist policy pressed forward. In the face of growing Palestinian resistance the Zionists adopted the same approach they had always used in dealing with the "Arab problem," which was to seek-both with the British government and with Arab leaders-a solution outside Palestine within the wider framework of the Arab countries.

At the root of this notion—that the Palestinians did not have to be dealt with directly—was the denial of a distinct Palestinian identity or any semblance of Palestinian nationalism. This was unquestionably grounded in the dismissive attitude that had always attended anything relating to Palestinians or Palestinian culture. Thus the attitudes of the two pivotal figures in the creation of the Israeli state, Chaim Weizmann (principally in the diplomatic and international arena) and David Ben-Gurion (principally as leader of the Yishuv). It also explains Weizmann's assessment, even prior to the British conquest of Palestine, that the Palestinians "could be bought off" their land "or suppressed with a little firmness"—in essence, that they were a negligible factor posing no obstacle to Zionist or British plans. [41] For Weizmann, the native population was akin to "the rocks of Judea, as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path." [42] Ben-Gurion, too, expressed disdain towards Arab society and culture and distrusted the Arabs in general. Surely significant is the fact that, despite an aptitude for language that enabled him to learn—in addition to his native Yiddish—Hebrew, Turkish, English, Russian, French, German, and later in life Spanish and ancient Greek, he never learned the language of the people among whom he lived for almost his entire life. [43]

It is true that under certain extreme circumstances—such as the anti-Jewish Arab riots of 1929 triggered by a perceived change in status of the holy places and prolonged strikes and fighting that dominated Palestine during the Great Arab Rebellion of 1936 to 1939—Zionist leaders sometimes recognized a certain national and mass character to the Palestinians' opposition to Zionism. Thus, several months after the 1929 riots, Ben-Gurion told the joint secretariat of the major Zionist groupings in the Yishuv:

> The debate as to whether or not an Arab national movement exists is a pointless verbal exercise; the main thing for us is that the movement attracts the masses. We do not regard it as a resurgence movement and its moral worth is dubious. But politically speaking it is a national movement.... The Arab must not and cannot be a Zionist. He could never wish the Jews to become a majority. This is the true antagonism between us and the Arabs. We both want to be the majority. [44]

Similarly, not long after the outbreak of the rebellion in 1936, Ben-Gurion, who had become the year before chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, the twenty-odd member body that made major political and strategic decisions affecting the future of Zionism and the Yishuv, acknowledged at a meeting of his Mapai party that the indigenous Palestinians were fighting to keep Palestine as an Arab country:

> ...the fear is not of losing land, but of losing the homeland of the Arab people, which others want to turn into the homeland of the Jewish people. The Arab is fighting a war that cannot be ignored. He goes out on strike, he is killed, he makes great sacrifices. [45]

A year later Ben-Gurion wrote to Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), the powerful head of the Jewish Agency Political Department who would become Israel's first foreign minister, that were he a politically conscious Arab, he would protest Jewish immigration because "what Arab cannot do his math and understand that the immigration at the rate of 60,000 a year means a Jewish state in all of Palestine?" [46]

But such statements were not representative of his attitudes, nor of the attitudes of other Zionist leaders. Indeed, when Zionist leaders referred to Palestinian nationalism, especially as of the mid-1930s, it was generally to compare it to German Nazism. Thus Yitzhak Tabenkin, one of the most important Labor leaders of the Yishuv and a leading ideologue of the kibbutz movement, described the Palestinian national movement in his May Day speech of 1936 as a "Nazi" movement, with which there was no possibility of compromise. [47] A few months later, Berl Katznelson, one of the three most important Labor leaders of the Yishuv (along with Ben-Gurion and Tabenkin) referred to Palestinian nationalism in a speech to Mapai members as "Nazism," and spoke of "typical Arab bloodlust." [48] On another occasion, in January 1937, he spoke of "Arab fascism and imperialism and Arab Hitlerism." [49]

Such references to Palestinian nationalism notwithstanding, the dominant and fundamental view among the Zionist leadership was to deny anything akin to Palestinian national feeling. For Ben-Gurion as for others, the Palestinians were not a distinct people but merely "Arabs"—the "Arab

population" or "Arab community" that happened to reside in the country. Ben-Gurion succinctly expressed this idea in 1936: "There is no conflict between Jewish and Palestinian nationalism because the Jewish nation is not in Palestine and the Palestinians are not a nation." [50]

Closely linked to this idea of the nonexistence of the Palestinians as a nation and their nonattachment to the particular soil of Palestine is their belonging to a larger Arab nation. Hence the way in which the Zionists seized upon the Arab nationalist movement that was sweeping the Arab world as a justification for their own program. After all, if the Palestinians did not constitute a distinct, separate nation and were not an integral part of the country with profound historical ties to it, but instead belonged to the larger Arab nation, then they could be shifted to other territories of that nation without undue prejudice. Similarly, if the Palestinians were merely a local part of a larger body, then they were not a major party to the conflict with Zionism; thus Zionist efforts to deal over their heads with outside Arabs was completely justifiable. It is thus that Zionist pronouncements are full of references to the vast Arab territories: who could begrudge the Jews these "few kilometres," to use Zangwill's formulation? Hence Moshe Beilinson, a writer, Labor leader, and a close associate of Ben-Gurion, wrote in 1929:

> There is a fundamental and decisive difference between the situation of the Arabs as a nation and that of the Jews as a nation. Palestine is not needed by the Arabs from the national point of view. They are bound to other centres. There, in Syria, in Iraq, in the Arabian Peninsula lies the homeland of the Arab people. [51]

And on the question of the Palestinians being deprived of their rights as a result of the exclusive Jewish right to sovereignty over Palestine, Beilinson pronounced:

> There is no answer to this question nor can there be, and we are not obliged to provide it because we are not responsible for the fact that a particular individual man was born in a certain place, and not several kilometres away from there. [52]

Ben-Gurion's belief that Palestinians had little attachment to Jerusalem derived from the same line of argument. During the violent Arab-Jewish clashes of 1929 over changing the status quo with regard to praying rights at Jerusalem's holy places, he stated: "Jerusalem is not the same thing to the Arabs as it is to the Jews. The Arab people inhabits many great lands." [53]

Such assertions were crucial to legitimize Zionism's denial of the Palestinian Arabs' entitlement to self-determination in Palestine or even part of Palestine. The wider context of pan-Arabism thus provided Zionism with a moral justification for the transfer of the "Arabs" of Palestine to neighboring Arab territories.

The argument that the Palestinians should move out of what should become the Jewish state and be subsumed in the Arab world underpinned the Zionist transfer plans of the 1930s and 1940s. This conception was predicated on the contradictory notion that the Arab national question in Palestine could be somehow detached from the demands of Arab nationalism regarding Palestine, and that the latter could simultaneously subsume the Palestinian Arabs. And although the events in Palestine and the Middle East at large underlined pan-Arabism's opposition to the Zionist colonization of Palestine, the Yishuv leaders continued to canvass privately with Arab leaders in the hope of accomplishing a transfer of Palestine's Arab population.

Zionist attempts to reach agreement with Arab leaders generally consisted in offering benefits—in terms of finance, expertise, or international influence—in exchange for acquiescence in the expansion of the Yishuv in Palestine and, later, for assistance in absorbing the anticipated Arab transferees. This strategic approach continued during the 1930s and beyond with secret initiatives promoting transfer schemes by Jewish Agency leaders' with Emir Abdallah of Transjordan, Ibn Saud, and Iraqi politicians.

But there were important precedents even before that time. The most prominent, certainly, was the January 1919 agreement between Chaim Weizmann and the Hashemite Emir Faisal, aspirant to leadership of the Arab nationalist movement. According to the agreement, concluded under British auspices in the presence of T.E. Lawrence, Faisal would support Jewish immigration into Palestine on the basis of the Balfour Declaration,

while the Zionist Organization would provide economic experts to the Arab state Faisal sought to create. Although the agreement does not mention transfer, it nonetheless serves as a kind of prototype of attempted Zionist deals in that it involves an exchange of Zionist assistance for Arab acquiescence in Zionist goals.

Another attempted deal, this one backed by Baron Edmond-James de Rothschild, the French financier and patron of the early Zionist colonies, was discussed in 1929. The plan, though apparently not broached with Arab leaders, nonetheless involved precisely the same principle. Following a meeting with de Rothschild in Paris, Vladimir Jabotinsky wrote in a letter to a friend that the Baron "...is willing to give money to the Arabs in order to enable them to purchase other lands, but on condition that they leave Palestine..." [54]

Referring to de Rothschild's plan, Shabtai Levi of Haifa, who had been a land purchasing agent of the organization founded by the Baron, the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA), wrote in his memoirs:

> He advised me to carry on in similar activities, but it is better, he said, not to transfer the Arabs to Syria and Transjordan, as these are part of the Land of Israel, but to Mesopotamia (Iraq). He added that in these cases he would be ready to send the Arabs, at his expense, new agricultural machines, and agricultural advisers. [55]

The same basic elements—a Zionist free hand in Palestine in exchange for Jewish help in settling the Palestinians elsewhere—were present in Ben-Gurion's proposal to the Palestinian leader Musa al-Alami on 31 August 1934, at the latter's village near Jerusalem. [56] Ben-Gurion noted in his diary his proposal that Palestine and Transjordan should be reconstituted as a single Jewish state linked to a federation of Arab states, an arrangement that would ensure "unlimited [Jewish] immigration and settlement in Transjordan." [57] According to Alami's account of the meeting, Ben-Gurion suggested that "if the Arabs would leave Palestine and Transjordan to the Jews, they [the Arabs] could count on Jewish help, not only in resettling the displaced Palestinians, but for Arab causes in other countries." [58] Ben-Gurion reported, for his part, that Alami voiced *inter alia* his apprehensions

regarding the fate of the Palestinians in the Jewish state. Since they were largely farmers, they would be dispossessed, and “without land, the Arabs will have nothing to do” because of the Yishuv’s policy of employing exclusively “Jewish labor” and of excluding Arabs from the Jewish economy.

Ben-Gurion replied that Zionist policy was against creating a situation such as prevailed in South Africa, where the whites were the owners and rulers and the blacks were workers. Echoing Herzl’s earlier expressed desire to “spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our country,” Ben-Gurion stated that Zionist colonization and economic expansion would create “opportunities for Arab employment, not only in Palestine, but throughout the Arab federation.” [59] Thus, in order to avoid replicating the South African model of a colonial society living off the economic exploitation of the indigenous population and at the same time to solve the problem of “Hebrew Labor,” the Yishuv would encourage the Palestinians to look for employment (created by Zionist enterprise) and, consequently, residency (a discreet transfer process) in an Arab country such as Iraq.

Even as Zionist leaders were searching for solutions to the “Arab problem” within the wider Arab framework, concrete steps were being taken on the ground to facilitate implementation of whatever solutions might be found. Throughout the Mandatory period the Zionist Yishuv advanced along its own political trajectories. Its goal of building “a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people” was the determining factor in its dealings with the indigenous population: once the idea of Jewish statehood as a precondition for the “ingathering of exiles” and creating a Jewish majority in Palestine took hold, there was little scope for compromise with the Palestinian Arab majority to be displaced.

The growing Palestinian resistance to Zionist aims, culminating in the 1936–39 Arab rebellion, was met by redoubled Zionist determination to implement the fundamental doctrine of separation between the Yishuv and Palestinian Arabs. The means of achieving this doctrine were “redemption” or “conquest” (the terms used by the Zionists themselves) of “Hebrew

Land" and "Hebrew Labor," by which is meant, respectively, the acquisition of land exclusively for Jewish use and the exclusive employment of Jewish workers on Zionist-owned land or enterprises. "If we want Hebrew redemption 100%, then we must have a 100% Hebrew settlement, a 100% Hebrew farm, and a 100% Hebrew port," declared Ben-Gurion at a meeting of the Va'ad Leumi, the Yishuv's National Council, on 5 May 1936. [60] Two weeks later, on 19 May, the transfer issue was raised at a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, effectively the Yishuv's leadership.

The doctrines of "Hebrew Land" and "Hebrew Labor" dated back to the early years of Zionist colonization. One of the provisions of the Jewish National Fund, established in 1901 as the land acquisition and administration arm of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and by far the largest Jewish landowner in Palestine, was that any land it acquired was to be held in perpetual trust for the Jewish people. Such land was inalienable, and non-Jewish labor was not allowed on it.

The struggle to enforce the doctrine of exclusive "Hebrew Labor" intensified after the 1929 Wailing Wall riots, when the Histadrut, the federation of Jewish labor in the Yishuv, launched a campaign to physically remove Arab workers employed in Zionist industry in cities. During the same period, Jewish society was mobilized to picket Jewish-owned citrus groves that employed Arab labor. It was after that time, too, that Ben-Gurion began using—albeit with a modified meaning—the term Vladimir Jabotinsky had coined in articles in the early 1920s: "the iron wall." Thus, in 1929, Ben-Gurion wrote of the need for an "iron wall of [Zionist] workers' settlements surrounding every Hebrew city and town, land and human bridges that would link isolated points," [61] and which would be capable of enforcing the doctrine of exclusive "Hebrew Labor" and "Hebrew Land."

Recalling the implementation of the doctrine of Hebrew Labor some years later, Mapai leader David Hacohen explained:

> I remember being one of the first of our comrades [of the Ahdut Ha'avodah] to go to London after the First World War.... There I became a socialist....[In Palestine] I had to fight my friends on the

> issue of Jewish socialism, to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union, the Histadrut; to defend preaching to housewives that they not buy at Arab stores; to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there.... To pour kerosene on Arab tomatoes; to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash the Arab eggs they had bought; to praise to the skies the Kereen Kayemet [Jewish National Fund] that sent Hankin to Beirut to buy land from absentee effendi [landlords] and to throw the fellahin [peasants] off the land—to buy dozens of dunams—from an Arab is permitted, but to sell, God forbid, one Jewish dunam to an Arab is prohibited. [62]

The fostering of Arab-Jewish separation was not merely an ideological decision. It advanced in pragmatic terms Zionist goals of colonization and could be said to lay the groundwork for the transfer solution. Yishuv leaders such as Ben-Gurion, [63] Berl Katznelson, Yosef Baratz, David Hacohen, and many others, including moderates and committed socialists, saw the logical connection between the doctrine of separation between Jews and Arabs—for them the consolidation and concretization of the development of a Jewish national life—and an eventual transfer. Indeed, during the debates that took place in the of summer 1937, a number of Zionists cited as precedents legitimizing mass transfer the forcible “mini-transfers” of Arab tenant farmers from the lands bought out from under them from absentee landlords. It is also no coincidence that the emphasis on exclusionist concepts correlated with the active (though private) promotion of the transfer schemes from 1936 onwards.

Meanwhile, the Zionist leadership, headed by Ben-Gurion’s Mapai party (created in 1930 through the merger of *Hapo’el Hatza’ir* and *Ahdut Ha’avodah*), took advantage of the Palestinian rebellion of 1936–39 to strengthen and expand the Yishuv’s military forces, the Haganah. The build-up of the Yishuv’s military apparatus and infrastructure was also conjoined with an apparently growing conviction that a fundamental Zionist solution to the “Arab demographic problem” was to be found not in agreement with the indigenous population, nor even, perhaps, with outside Arab leaders but, ultimately, in a military solution. The belief was beginning to take hold that the “Arab problem” could be tackled only from a position of military strength and by creating economic, military, and

settlement *faits accomplis* in Arab Palestine. In 1936, Ben-Gurion declared at a meeting of the Mapai Central Committee:

> ...there is no chance of an understanding with the Arabs unless we first reach an understanding with the English, by which we will become a preponderant force in Palestine. What can drive the Arabs to a mutual understanding with us?... Facts...only after we manage to establish a great Jewish fact in this country...only then will the precondition for discussion with the Arabs be met. [64]

Also significant is the fact that as early as the summer of 1937, the Haganah had prepared a military plan [the Avner Plan] for the conquest of Palestine in three stages, with the exception of the Negev, south of Beersheba. [65]

But while the Zionists were concentrating on building up the Yishuv's organization and military strength, they continued to be attentive to how their actions were perceived among their Western sponsors. Weizmann, for instance, who presided over Zionist activities in the West, maintained in 1931 that the Zionists' public insistence on creating a majority in Palestine could be interpreted by the world "as an attempt to expel the Arabs from Palestine" [66]—this at the very time when he was actively promoting his plan of transferring the Arabs to neighboring states. * Similar concern for public perceptions impelled the Zionists in 1931 temporarily to endorse the formula of a legislative council (or assembly) based on "parity" between Arabs and Jews (at a time when the Jews constituted only 17 percent of the population). The "parity" idea was meant to deflect British pressures for establishing representative government, viewed with great anxiety given the overwhelming Arab majority. [67] But by the mid-1930s, when British pressure for self-government had diminished and when the Yishuv was growing in numerical strength and confidence, the parity slogan was dropped and even denounced by Ben-Gurion as incongruous with Zionist aims in Palestine. [68] Similarly, Ben Gurion's slogan from the 1920s, "not to rule and not to be ruled in Eretz Yisrael," was shown in the 1930s to be little more than a temporizing, public relations gesture, belied by his private pronouncements in support of Zionist maximalist aims.

Although the Yishuv's politics were far from monolithic, the basic assumptions concerning the solution to the "Arab problem" in Palestine were by and large shared, the main differences being tactical, rhetorical, and stylistic. It is true that some marginal groups such as Brit Shalom (Covenant of Peace), which ceased in the early 1930s, and later Ihud (Union), organized in 1942, took a different line. These binationalist groups espoused a *modus vivendi* of a binational framework accommodating Palestinian nationalism, and favored a binational state with political and civil equality for Jews and Arabs. But despite the immense international stature and prestige of some of binationalism's adherents—notably Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, and Hans Kohn—the groups had virtually no influence either on policy or on the Yishuv at large. Moreover, a number of the liberal intellectuals adhering to binationalist groups actually accepted the Zionist objective of a Jewish majority in the long run; some of the leading members of Brit Shalom, including, for example, David Werner Senator, one of the four non-Zionist members of the Jewish Agency Executive, and Ya'acov Thon, Arthur Ruppin's assistant and later successor as director of the Palestine Land Development Company, both ended up advocating "maximum" transfer, as we shall see. [69] Arthur Ruppin himself, a cofounder of Brit Shalom, was an early proponent of transfer, as already noted.

The binational groups notwithstanding, the main division within Zionism was between the Labor and Revisionist movements. Revisionism, which advocated the "revision" of the Mandate to include Transjordan as well as Palestine, was established by Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1925. The movement has always been known for its maximalist, uncompromising positions, in contrast to the pragmatic, gradualist, and flexible approach of the dominant Labor Zionism. With regard to ultimate solutions relating to the "Arab problem," however, there was little difference between them.

Jabotinsky frequently accused Labor Zionism of hypocrisy; in his view, the creation of a Jewish state had always meant imposing the will of Zionism on the Palestinian Arabs, and the resistance of the latter to the former was but the natural and logical consequence of Zionist objectives. According to Jabotinsky, Zionist actions had been carried out against the wishes of the Arab majority.

> Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population—an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, in toto, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would be hypocrisy.

He also pointed out that Zionists believed in an "iron wall":

> In this sense, there is no meaningful difference between our "militarists" and our "vegetarians." One prefers an iron wall of Jewish bayonets, the other proposes an iron wall of British bayonets, the third proposes an agreement with Baghdad, and appears to be satisfied with Baghdad's bayonets—a strange and somewhat risky taste—but we all applaud, day and night, the iron wall. [70]

The doctrine of the "iron wall of bayonets" was to form a central plank in the Revisionists' attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs. In Jabotinsky's mind, to conclude an agreement with the Palestinians allowing the creation of a predominant Jewish majority and eventual statehood—which the Labor groups publicly advocated in the 1920s and early 1930s—was neither possible nor desirable. On the contrary, a confrontation was natural and even inevitable, Jabotinsky pronounced. Only an "iron wall," of a Jewish armed garrison, would be able to secure Jewish sovereignty on both sides of the Jordan River. [71]

Jabotinsky was, inevitably, a proponent of transfer. In a letter to one of his Revisionist colleagues in the United States dated November 1939, he wrote: "There is no choice: the Arabs must make room for the Jews in Eretz Israel. If it was possible to transfer the Baltic peoples, it is also possible to move the Palestinian Arabs," adding that Iraq and Saudi Arabia could absorb them. [72] Jabotinsky also alluded in a number of articles to the Greco-Turkish "transfer," describing it as a brutal, coercive action imposed by the victorious Turks but which proved ultimately beneficial to the Greeks. [73]

Like Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Katznelson, and Tabenkin, Jabotinsky expressed contempt towards the indigenous Arabs. Yet, unlike the Labor figures, he did not mince his words: “We Jews, thank God, have nothing to do with the East....The Islamic soul must be broomed out of Eretz-Yisrael.” [74] Echoing Zangwill, Jabotinsky described Arabs and Muslims as “yelling rabble dressed up in gaudy, savage rags.” [75]

The ideological legacy of Jabotinsky-led Revisionism found expression in two offshoots. The first was the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (IZL, or the Irgun), an underground military organization formed in 1935 and commanded in the 1940s by Menahem Begin, later prime minister of Israel. The second was the Lehi (Lohamei Herut Yisra’el, also known as the Stern Gang after its founder, Avraham Stern), which broke away from the IZL in June 1940; the organization was later co-commanded by Yitzhak Shamir. Stern described the Arabs as “beasts of the desert, not a legitimate people.” [76] “The Arabs are not a nation but a mole that grew in the wilderness of the eternal desert. They are nothing but murderers,” wrote Stern in 1940. [77] Lehi advocated that any Palestinian resistance to Zionist objectives should be crushed mercilessly. Moreover, Lehi’s original doctrine, formulated by Stern, called not only for the “transfer” of the Palestinians but also of the Transjordanians, Syrians, and Lebanese who resided in those areas deemed to belong to the Land of Israel. [78] In its memorandum to the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947 as well as in its political program of July-August 1948 in preparation for the first Knesset election, [79] Lehi called for the compulsory evacuation of the entire Arab population of Palestine, preferably to Iraq, and declared it “considers an exchange of the Arab population and the Jews of Arab countries as the best solution for the troubled relationship between the Jewish people and the Arabs.” [80]

Jabotinsky endorsed the terror campaign launched in the late 1930s by the Irgun, a campaign that involved such actions as placing bomb-loaded vegetable barrows in crowded Arab markets in Haifa and Jerusalem and firing indiscriminately on Arab civilian houses. [81] While Irgun’s bombing attacks of the late 1930s and 1948 were aimed at Palestinian civilians, the group also launched attacks against the British from 1944 to 1948. Lehi specialized in political assassinations. Later, during the 1947–48 war, these

campaigns were intensified and played an important role in the exodus of Palestinians from what became the State of Israel.

The Weizmann Transfer Scheme of 1930

In August 1929, Arab-Jewish clashes erupted throughout Palestine following a political demonstration by militant Revisionist Jews at the Wailing Wall, next to the Haram al-Sharif, Islam's third holiest site. The Shaw Commission appointed by the British government to investigate the causes of the disturbances—in which 133 Jews, including women and children, were killed—submitted its findings in March 1930. According to the report, the "Arabs have come to see in Jewish immigration not only a menace to their livelihood, but a possible overlord of the future." It further signalled the seriousness of landlessness among Palestinian peasants, and warned that further Zionist colonization would exacerbate an already grave problem. [82]

Indeed, one of the chief causes of this landlessness was the sale of tracts of land by absentee landlords to the Yishuv and the subsequent eviction of the tenant farmers. Peasant tenancy had evolved into a permanent institution in Arab villages, and was not different from outright ownership except in the payment of ground rent by the tenants. [83] Almost invariably, the tenants had cultivated the land for generations, and many had once owned the land they farmed but had been forced at some point to sell to creditors or absentee landlords. The fact that the tenant farmers, more or less oblivious to the legal status of the land, regarded the land as their own property only increased their bitterness when they were forced to vacate it.

It was against the background of the 1929 disturbances that Chaim Weizmann, president of both the Zionist Organization and the newly established Jewish Agency Executive, actively began promoting ideas for Arab transfer in private discussions with British officials and ministers. Weizmann had met with the Shaw Commission in the course of its investigations in January, before the Commission's report was drawn up. Already at that time, it was clear that land and landownership were important issues in the inquiry, and Weizmann had argued before the Commission that there would have been no land problems if Transjordan—

considered by Zionists as part of the greater land of Israel—had not been separated from Palestine. [84]

Several months later, on 4 March 1930—the eve of the publication of the Shaw Commission report—Weizmann and other Zionist leaders met with the parliamentary undersecretary for the colonies, Dr. Drummond Shiels. Shiels had supported the Zionists in their opposition to the establishment of democratic self-government in Palestine, a proposition that would have placed the Jews, still a small minority, at great disadvantage. During his meeting with Weizmann, Shiels expressed the view that "a transfer of the Arab population was desirable." [85] According to Weizmann's account of the meeting:

> Some radical solution must be found, and [Dr. Shiels] didn't see why one should not really make Palestine a national home for the Jews and tell it frankly to the Arabs, pointing out that in Transjordan and Mesopotamia they had vast territories where they could work without let or hindrance....Weizmann replied that a solution like that was a courageous and statesman-like attempt to grapple with a problem that had been tackled hitherto half-heartedly; that if the Jews were allowed to develop their National Home in Palestine unhindered the Arabs would certainly not suffer—as they hadn't hitherto. Some might flow off into neighbouring countries, and this quasi exchange of population could be fostered and encouraged. It had been done with signal success under the aegis of the League of Nations in the case of the Greeks and Turks... [86]

Two days later, on 6 March, Weizmann elaborated on the idea of transferring the Palestinian population to Transjordan and Iraq during a meeting with Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb), the colonial secretary. Lord Passfield mentioned that, from what he had heard of the as-yet unpublished Shaw report, "the only grave question it had revealed was the problem of [Arab] tenants on land which had been acquired by Zionist[s]," and that "the cumulative effect of this process, if it continued, might produce a landless proletariat, which would be a cause of unrest in the country." [87] According to Weizmann's account of the meeting, Lord Passfield said that "one had to stabilise the conditions in the country," and that "Transjordan

might be a way out." [88] Weizmann concurred, repeating his contention that land problems could be traced to Transjordan's removal from the Mandate and the exclusion of Jewish colonization there. Therefore he added, "Now that one found oneself in difficulties in Palestine, surely if we could not cross the Jordan the Arabs could. And this was applicable to Iraq." [89]

While Lord Passfield was searching for ways to stabilize the "politically dangerous" situation that had been caused by the dispossession of the Palestinian farmers, Wiezmann was putting forward specific, clearly formulated proposals in the direction of encouraging an Arab exodus. At one point in the conversation, Passfield remarked that Iraq, with an independent government, might object to the proposal. According to Weizmann's account:

> My reply was: "Of course, it isn't easy, but these countries have to be developed, and they cannot be developed capitalistically because of their political situation, but they could be colonised by Moslems, and possibly by Jews. One requires a great deal of preparation for it, and, in cooperation with the government we could attempt to negotiate with the Arabs"....I then said, "supposing we were to create a Development Company which would acquire a million dunams of land in Transjordania, this would establish a reserve [for Arab resettlement] and relieve Palestine from pressure, if any should exist." [90]

Over the next few months, the transfer proposal was on Weizmann's mind, as evidenced from the correspondence between him and several colleagues in May. [91] On 23 June, he sent a telegram to Felix Green asking for a detailed account of the land available in Transjordan for the resettlement of proposed Palestinian transferees. [92]

What is significant is that for the first time the Yishuv leadership had presented members of the British government with an official, albeit secret, proposal for the transfer of Palestinians to Transjordan. Weizmann left the details of the plan to be worked out by Pinhas Rutenberg, an engineer, industrialist, and financier who was both chairman of Va'ad Leumi, the Yishuv's National Council, and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive (though he resigned both positions in 1931). Rutenberg had already worked

out detailed plans for exploiting the waters of the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers for hydroelectric purposes for the Yishuv, and in 1921 the Mandate government had granted him a concession on the basis of which he founded the Palestine Electric Corporation in 1923.

The Weizmann-Rutenberg scheme of 1930, which was presented to the Colonial Office, proposed that a loan of one million Palestinian pounds be raised from Jewish financial sources for the resettlement of Palestinian peasant communities in Transjordan, pending the granting of permission for Zionist settlement east of the Jordan River. [93]

It is difficult to determine the details of the Weizmann-Rutenberg plan with any certainty while the Colonial Office files on the subject remain classified. What is clear is that the plan was swiftly rejected by Lord Passfield, who had become in the meantime sharply aware of the extent of Palestinian nationalist opposition to Zionism, [94] and by Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's government. In June Lord Passfield wrote a letter to the prime minister saying that "neither the British nor the Palestine Government could possibly touch this Transjordan project." [95] At two meetings; with Weizmann on 7 July 1930 and with Weizmann and Selig Brodetsky, the president of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland and a member of the Zionist Executive, on 18 July, the colonial secretary ruled out any large-scale Palestinian displacement and resettlement in Transjordan as well as any Jewish settlement there. Two reasons were given: prohibitive financial cost, and the anticipated strength of the Arab opposition. [96] The British treasury added its objection to any financial commitment to the plan. [97]

Indeed, far from going along with Weizmann's proposals in favor of transfer, Lord Passfield was responsible for the issuance in October 1930 of the Passfield White Paper, which recommended that restrictions be placed on Jewish immigration in order to alleviate the pressures on Palestinian peasants resulting from Zionist acquisition of the land they worked. [98] The White Paper's conclusions were influenced by the Hope-Simpson report, likewise issued in October 1930, although completed several months earlier, which estimated that about 30,000 rural Palestinian families (i.e., 29.4 percent of the rural population) had become landless and which stated that

no additional land was available in Palestine for settlement by Jewish immigrants.

The Zionists were extremely unhappy about what was seen as the pro-Arab tilt of the new statement of British policy, but Weizmann, while protesting that the White Paper "was inconsistent with the terms of the Mandate," [99] used the occasion to reiterate his solution of transfer. In an article published in the London-based *Week End Review* on 1 November 1930, he wrote:

> No statesmanlike view...could ignore the fact that Transjordan is legally part of Palestine...that in race, language and culture its people are indistinguishable from the Arabs of Western Palestine; that it is separated from Western Palestine only by a narrow stream; that it has been established as an Arab reserve, and that it would be just as easy for landless Arabs or cultivators from the congested areas to migrate to Transjordan as to migrate from one part of Western Palestine to another. [100]

Despite the setback (temporary, as it turned out) represented by the Passfield White Paper, Weizmann persisted in his efforts to persuade British officials that the transfer of dispossessed Palestinian farmers to Transjordan was a sound idea, and that any problems associated with it were mainly of an economic order. Alluding to the objections based on the cost of the project, he repeated his earlier suggestion to Lord Passfield that a loan could be raised. The loan, however, would have to be guaranteed by the British, who would also have to agree to extending the Yishuv to Transjordan, which would constitute a reserve for Arab transferees. [101] In a private discussion with Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson on 4 December 1930, Weizmann proposed that a Round Table Conference be convened with the Arabs in order to discuss the "problem of the congested area in Cis-Jordan [which] could be solved by development of, and migration of Arabs to, Transjordania." [102]

Weizmann's efforts to promote transfer were very much behind the scenes, but others were aware of his activities. Lewis Namier, the political secretary of the powerful Jewish Agency, had been present at the 4 December meeting in the House of Commons. [103] A hint that Ben-Gurion had been

privy to the scheme is found in his diary entry of 24 June 1930, the day after Weizmann's wire to Felix Green asking for details about land availability in Transjordan. Ben-Gurion, who at the same time was conducting talks with British officials in London, wrote that the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine did not mean "the removal of many Arabs from Palestine"—a possible reference to the Weizmann-Rutenberg plan. [104]

Nor was Weizmann alone in advancing transfer solutions during that period: on 17 June 1930, the proposal of transferring Arabs from Palestine to Transjordan to solve the problem of dispossessed peasants was put forward at a meeting of the Directorate of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the leading settlement organization. [105] The Directorate repeated the proposal the following year, during its meeting of 29 April 1931. Also in 1931, the Jewish Agency submitted a proposal to a British-appointed committee headed by Lewis French to study the situation of dispossessed Arab farmers, including those of Wadi al-Hawarith evicted from lands sold to the JNF by an absentee landlord. The solution proposed by the Jewish Agency —removal of the dispossessed Arabs to Transjordan—was rejected by the British High Commissioner, Arthur Wauchope, as an attempt to expel the country's peasant population. [106] The following year, Victor Jacobson, then representative of the Zionist Organization at the League of Nations and head of the Zionist political office in Paris, suggested in a secret memorandum the partition of Palestine on condition that 120,000 Arabs be removed from the Jewish area. [107]

While Weizmann's discussion of transfer plans were conducted behind closed doors, others were not so discreet. Menahem Ussishkin, one of the leading figures of the Yishuv, long the chairman of the Jewish National Fund and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, publicly called for the transfer of the Palestinians to other parts of the Middle East. In an address to journalists in Jerusalem on 28 April 1930, he stated:

> We must continually raise the demand that our land be returned to our possession....If there are other inhabitants there, they must be transferred to some other place. We must take over the land. We have a greater and nobler ideal than preserving several hundred thousands of Arab fellahin. [108]

Just as Zangwill's public utterances, a decade earlier, that the Arabs are not "entitled to the rules of democracy" and should be "gradually transplanted" had compromised Weizmann's dealings with Emir Faisal, so Ussishkin's public statements were considered politically damaging to the Zionist cause. Two days later, on 30 April, the Jewish Agency Executive passed a motion criticizing Ussishkin's statement, [109] even though the Agency itself would propose a study involving transfer the following year, and Ussishkin's own Jewish National Fund would submit a proposal recommending transfer to the Lewis French committee. The objection was to the *public* mention of transfer, which in the leadership's view could only produce such undesirable consequences as increasing Palestinian unrest, intensifying pressures to halt Jewish immigration to Palestine, and alienating public opinion in the West.

While Weizmann's 1930 transfer proposals were rejected by the British government, the justifications used in their defense formed the cornerstone of subsequent argumentation for transfer. Yishuv leaders continued to assert that there was nothing "immoral" about the concept; that the transfer of the Greek and Turkish populations provided a precedent for a similar measure for the Palestinian Arabs; and that the uprooting and transfer of the population to Transjordan, Iraq, or any other part of the Arab world would merely constitute a relocation from one Arab district to another. [110]

* See pp. 30–44.

Notes

1. A speech delivered at a meeting of the French Zionist Federation, Paris, 28 March 1914; cited in Barnet Litvinoff, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , vol. 1, series B, paper 24 (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1983), pp. 115–16.

2. See protocol of Ruppin's speech at the Jewish Agency Executive's meeting, 20 May 1936, in Yosef Heller, *Bama'vak Lemedinah, Hamediniyut Hatzionit Bashanim 1936–1948* [The Struggle for the State: The Zionist Policy 1936–1948] (Jerusalem: 1984), p. 140.

3. Israel Zangwill, *The Voice of Jerusalem* (London: William Heinemann, 1920), p. 104.

4. In 1906, “in all of Palestine there were 700,000 inhabitants, only 55,000 of whom were Jews, and only 550 of these were pioneers” [i.e., Zionists]. Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 9–10. In contrast with these Zionist “pioneers” the Palestinian Jews were mainly orthodox Jews, who lived in Jerusalem and a few smaller towns, and who were strongly opposed to the goals of political Zionism.

5. Speech delivered in April 1905, in *Israel Zangwill, Speeches, Articles and Letters* (London: The Soncino Press, 1937), p. 210.

6. A reference to a well-known essay, Yitzhaq Epstein, “The Hidden Question,” *Hashiloah* (1907), pp. 193–206.

7. See Neil Caplan, *Palestine Jewry and the Arab Question, 1917–1925* (London: Frank Cass, 1978) and Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

8. Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 50 and 62.

9. Ahad Ha’Am, “Emet Meeretz-Yisrael” [The Truth from the Land of Israel], in *Complete Works* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: 1961), pp. 27–29.

10. Ibid. Ahad Ha’Am is also quoted in Hans Kohn, *Zionism Reconsidered* , Michael Selzer, ed. (London: 1970), p. 195.

11. Epstein, “Hidden Question,” pp. 193–206.

12. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , pp. 49–50.

13. “Society of Jews” was the name used by Herzl in his book *Judenstat* to designate the political organization that he envisaged as the future representative of the Zionist movement.

14. Raphael Patai, ed., *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzi* , vol. 1 Harry Zohn, trans., (New York: Herzl Press and T. Yoseloff, 1960), pp. 88–89. The Herzl Press is a publishing house of the Jewish Agency for the Israel-American Section.

15. M. Smilansky, "In the Steppe," *Works, Vol. 1, 1891–1893* (Tel Aviv: undated), p. 206, quoted in Ahmad El Kodsy and Eli Lobel, *The Arab World and Israel* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 120.

16. Zangwill, *Speeches* , p. 210.

17. According to Jabotinsky's recollections of a conversation with Zangwill in 1916, in *Hamashkif* , 31 July 1939; and in Jabotinsky, *Zichronot Ben Dori* , pp. 254–63. See also "Discussions with Zangwill," *Der Moment* , 27 July 1939, quoted in Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), pp. 264, 400.

18. Cited in Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , p.271; Yosef Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin Lepetron Be'ayat Eretz-Yisrael" [Population Exchange Plans for the Solution of the Problem of the Land of Israel], *Gesher* (Jerusalem) 24, nos. 1–2 (Spring-Summer 1978), p. 153; Yosef Nedava, "Yisrael Zangwill Vehabe'ayah Ha'arvit" [Israel Zangwill and the Arab Problem], *Haumah* (Jerusalem) no. 14 (October 1965), pp. 209–16.

19. The Ruppin memorandum is quoted in Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (London: 1972), p. 231. Also in 1911, Joshua H. Buchmil, a Russian Zionist propagandist, put forward a proposal to transfer the Palestine Arabs to northern Syria and Iraq to the Palestine Committee of the Tenth Zionist Congress held in Basle. Chaim Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895–1947* (New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1988), pp. 31–32.

20. Susan Hattis, "Old Idea with A Hateful Twist," *The Jerusalem Post Magazine* , 2 August 1985; Paul Alsberg, "The Arab Question in the Policy of the Zionist Executive before the First World War" (Hebrew), *Shivat Tzion* (Jerusalem) 4 (1955–56), pp. 206–7. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* ,

p. 231, mentions that Nahum Sokolow, subsequently president of the World Zionist Organization, had, also in 1914, endorsed the notion of Arab transfer. Another Zionist publicist, Avraham Sharon (Schwadron), began to propagate his views on compulsory Arab transfer as early as 1916. Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895–1947* , pp. 56–60.

21. Ruppin Diary, Ruppin's letter to Hans Kohn, 30 May 1930, quoted in Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 172–73 and 189.

22. B. Katznelson and Y. Kaufman, eds., *Ketvei Nahman Syrkin* [Writings of Nahman Syrkin], Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: 1939), pp. 20, 53–54; Mordechai Nisan, *Hamedinah Hayehudit Vehabe'ayah Ha'arvit* [The Jewish State and the Arab Problem] (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1986) p. 109.

23. Cited in Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 259 and 278. Motzkin repeated his transfer proposal in late 1918 in a paper entitled "The Basis of Zionism and the Way to Build Up Palestine." Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895–1947* , pp. 33–34.

24. Litvinoff, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , vol. 1, series B, pp. 256–57. Weizmann pronounced the same formula in an address to the English Zionist Federation in 1919: "By a Jewish National Home I mean the creation of such conditions that as the country is developed we can pour in a considerable number of immigrants, and finally establish such a society in Palestine that Palestine shall be as Jewish as England is English, or America American." (Address delivered in London on 21 September 1919). See also *Jewish Chronicle* , 20 May 1921, in Arie Bober, ed., *The Other Israel* (New York: Garden City, Doubleday, 1972), p. 137.

25. *Arab Bulletin* , no. 64, 7 October 1917, pp. 389–91, in PRO, FO. 882/26.

26. Quoted in Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin," p. 155.

27. Cited in Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 57–58; *Jewish Chronicle* , 13 December 1918.

28. Zangwill, *The Voice of Jerusalem* , p. 103.

29. Ibid., p. 93.

30. *Jewish Chronicle* , 12 December 1919.

31. Nedava, “Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin,” p. 153, citing a letter from Max Nordau to Zangwill dated 15 January 1919, in Zangwill’s file, CZA Jerusalem.

32. In 1917 the Jews constituted 10 percent of the population. They rose to 17 percent in 1931 and 33 percent in 1940. Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), p. 34.

33. PRO, CAB, 24/24.

34. Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Vol. 4, 1916–1922* (London: William Heinemann, 1975), p. 484.

35. *Jewish Chronicle* , 3 January 1964, p. 7.

36. Ibid., 14 January 1964, p. 7.

37. Ibid.

38. See Yosef Nedava, “British Plans for the Resettlement of Palestinian Arabs” (Hebrew), *Haumah* , no. 89 (Winter 1987/88), p. 132.

39. Nedava, “Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin,” p. 164, citing a letter dated 18 November 1917 from Zangwill to an aide in the Territorial Movement.

40. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 114.

41. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 56.

42. Ibid., citing a letter dated 19 August 1918. For more details on Weizmann's attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs, see his letter to Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary and author of the famous Balfour Declaration, dated 30 May 1918, in Doreen Ingrams' *Palestine Papers, 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London: John Murray, 1972), pp. 31–32.

43. See Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , pp. 118–19.

44. Ben-Gurion's views were voiced at the joint secretariat of Ahdut Ha'avodah and Hapo'el Hatza'ir, 10 November 1929; quoted in G. Shefer, "General Solution vs. Moderation in the Israel-Arab Conflict," *Zionism and the Arab Question* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1979).

45. Protocols of the Mapai party, 29 September 1936, quoted in Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , pp. 165 and 214.

46. Letter to Shertok dated 24 July 1937, in ibid., pp. 167–68.

47. Yitzhak Tabenkin, *Devarim* [Speeches], Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: 1972), p. 264.

48. Berl Katznelson, "Self-restraint and Defense," a speech dated 28 August 1936, in *Ketavim* [Writings], Vol. 8 (Tel Aviv: 1948), pp. 209–26.

49. A speech at the Mapai Council, Haifa, 23 January 1937, cited in Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , p. 253.

50. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 131, quoting Ben-Gurion's speech to the Inner Action Committee in Jerusalem, 12 October 1936. In a speech to the British Empire Labor Conference in London in August 1930, Ben-Gurion spoke against the British Labor government's recognition of the demand for self-determination—in the shape of home rule—in India. He feared this would create pressure for equal recognition of the Palestinian Arabs' rights for self-determination. For an abridgement of Ben-Gurion's speech see his *Yoman* [Diary], 4 August 1930, and *Igrot* [Letters], Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1974), letter dated 28 July 1930, cited in Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , pp. 109 and 211.

51. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , p. 214, quoting Beilinson's article "Right over Palestine," in *Davar* , 4 December 1929.

52. Ibid.

53. Quoted in Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 39.

54. Yosef Schechtman, *The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story, Vol. 2, 1923–35* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Karni Publishing House, 1959), p. 152.

55. Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin," pp. 164–65, quoting Levi's manuscript. Levi was mentioned in Edward Norman's transfer scheme to Iraq in 1934 as a useful agent who would be willing to assist in the scheme. See p. 141.

56. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , pp. 137–40.

57. The Israeli historian Yehoshua Porath writes in his book *In Search of Arab Unity 1930–1945* (London: Frank Cass, 1986, pp. 62–67) about the support of some highly important Zionist leaders for a Jewish state in Palestine linked to an Arab federation in the Fertile Crescent and/or Arabia. What is crucially missing in his otherwise fully-documented work, however, is the fact that the support for Arab federation was linked in Zionist thinking with the transfer idea, as in Ben-Gurion's proposal to Musa al-Alami.

58. Geoffrey Furlonge, *Palestine is My Country: The Story of Musa Alami* (London: John Murry, 1969), p. 105.

59. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 140; David Ben-Gurion, *Pegishotai Im Manhigim 'Araviyim* [My Meetings with Arab Leaders] (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1967), p. 25.

60. David Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1971–72), p. 163.

61. Quoted in Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 79.

62. Published in *Ha'aretz* , 15 November 1969, and quoted in Arie Bober, *The Other Israel: The Radical Case against Zionism* (New York: Garden City, 1972), p. 12.

63. The notion that the transfer was in conjunction with the doctrine of "Hebrew Labor" was stated explicitly by Ben-Gurion in 1937. See his *Yoman* [Diary], 12 July 1937; Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, p. 298. See also the Soskin plan, p. 80.

64. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 155.

65. *Sefer Toldot Hahaganah* [The History of the Haganah], Vol. 2, part 2, pp. 748–58.

66. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , p. 205.

67. The Zionists threw their weight vociferously against the idea of self-governing institutions—a demand put forward by the Palestinians and toyed with by the British in the 1920s. See Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Harper, 1949), pp. 207 and 381; J.M. Machover, *Governing Palestine: The Case against a Parliament* (London: P.S. King, 1936), p. 21. For further details on the tactical nature of "parity," see Aharon Cohen, *Israel and the Arab World* (London: 1970), p. 255; Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 63 and 77.

68. See S.L. Hattis, *The Bi-national Idea in Palestine during Mandatory Times* (Haifa: 1970), p. 167. In 1968 Meir Ya'ari, the co-leader of Mapam, "taunted" Ben-Gurion with having advocated a binational state in the aftermath of the 1967 war. In response Ben-Gurion wrote in *Ha'aretz* on 15 March 1968 that neither his own writings, nor those of his Mapai's colleagues "contained a single idea that could be described in favour of bi-nationalism."

69. The Palestine Land Development Company was called upon, among other things, to purchase land on behalf of the Jewish National Fund. Before 1948 its board included prominent leaders advocating transfer, such as Victor Jacobson, Eliezer Kaplan, Berl Katznelson, David Werner Senator, Menahem Ussishkin, and Chaim Weizmann. Thon, who succeeded

Ruppin as managing director of the Company, was appointed towards the end of 1937 as the head of the Jewish Agency's first Transfer Committee.

70. Quoted in Lenni Brenner, *The Iron Wall—Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (London: Zed Books, 1984), pp. 74–75.

71. For further discussion of Jabotinsky's strategy, see Joseph Schechtman, *The Jabotinsky Story: Fighter and Prophet* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), p. 324. In 1925 Jabotinsky wrote an essay entitled "The Iron Law": "If you wish to colonize a land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison for the land, or find a benefactor who will maintain the garrison on your behalf...Zionism is a colonizing adventure and, therefore, it stands or falls on the question of armed forces." See *The Shahak Papers* , no. 31, "Collection on Jabotinsky: His Life and Excerpts from his Writings," p. 16.

72. Cited in Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv, "Expelling Palestinians," *The Washington Post* , Outlook section, 7 February 1988. Jabotinsky's letter was written against the background of the German-Soviet pact of August 1939.

73. Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* , p. 264.

74. Cited in Ya'acov Shavit, "The Attitude of Zionist Revisionism towards the Arabs," in *Zionism and the Arab Question* (Hebrew), p. 74.

75. See Joseph Schechtman, *Rebel and Statesman: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story, The Early Years* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1956), p. 54.

76. Cited in Amos Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1987), p. 212.

77. Cited in Yosef Heller, "Between Messianism and Realpolitik—Lehi and the Arab Question, 1940–1947," in Israel Gutman, ed., *Yahdut Zemanenu* [Contemporary Jewry], A Research Annual, Vol. 1, 1984, p. 225.

78. See Israel Shahak, “A History of the Concept of Transfer in Zionism,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1989), p. 36.

79. Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Lehi), *Ketavim* [Writings], Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: 1960), p. 581; *Ketavim* , Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv; 1959), pp. 27–28; and Heller, “Between Messianism and Realpolitik—Lehi and the Arab Question, 1940–1947,” pp. 204–207 and 237–39.

80. Quoted in Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* , p. 267.

81. See Samuel Katz, *Days of Fire* (London: W.H. Allen, 1968), pp. 31–37.

82. Shaw Commission Report Cmd. 3530, 1930. Apparently the Shaw report had considerable impact on British public opinion, which until then was predominantly in favor of Zionism.

83. D. Warriner, “Land Tenure Problems in the Fertile Crescent,” in C. Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of the Middle East: 1880–1914* (Chicago: 1966), p. 75.

84. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 69, citing minutes of the 43rd meeting of the Zionist Executive, London, 22 January 1930.

85. Ibid., citing Weizmann’s notes on the meeting held in a private room in the House of Commons.

86. Ibid., p. 69; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XIV.

87. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. 1, Series B, paper 116, p. 591.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid., p. 592.

91. See Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 93, note 65.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid., citing Weizmann's notes: Weizmann to Green, 15 May 1930, Weizmann to Melchett, 26 May 1930.

94. The Weizmann transfer proposal could not have come as a complete surprise to Lord Passfield. On 2 September 1929, his wife Beatrice, who had published in close coauthorship with him for many years, wrote—against the background of violent unrest in Palestine and the subsequent pressure put on her husband by Zionists—"Is there any principle relating to the rights of peoples to the territory in which they happen to live? I admire Jews and dislike Arabs. But the Zionist movement seems to me to be a gross violation of the right of the native to remain where he was born—if there is such a right." Beatrice Webb, *Diaries* , Margaret Cole, ed. (London: 1956), pp. 217–18.

95. Letter to P.M. dated 23 July 1930, cited in Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 69 and 93.

96. Joseph Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917–1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), pp. 71 and 85.

97. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 69 and 93; see also G. Sheffer, "Intentions and Results of British Policy in Palestine: Passfield's White Paper," *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 1 (January 1973), pp. 52–53.

98. Cmd. 3692, Statement of Policy.

99. *A Survey of Palestine: Prepared in December 1945 and January 1946 for the Information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry* , Vols. I, II, and Supplement (Palestine: Government Printer, 1946), p. 28.

100. The article is reprinted in *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. I, Series B, paper 120, pp. 605–606.

101. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 70, p. 93 note 68, citing minutes of the Joint Meeting of Zionist Executive with Special Political Committee, 1 December 1930. In fact Weizmann was seeking to extend the scope of Zionist colonization also to southern Lebanon and Syria. He was party to the WZO plan, submitted to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, to this end. In 1934 Weizmann tried to interest the French authorities in his settlement plan in Syria and Lebanon. See Weizmann's letter to Adelaide Cohen, April 1934, in *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. 17, p. 29.

102. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 70, p. 93 note 69.

103. Ibid., p. 93 note 69.

104. Quoted in Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , pp. 108–9, 211.

105. The same proposal was also repeated at the Directorate meeting of 29 April 1931. Central Zionist Archives, Minutes of the JNF Directorate, cited in Raya Adler (Cohen), "Mandatory Land Policy, Tenancy and the Wadi al-Hawarith Affair, 1929–1933," *Studies in Zionism* 7, no. 2 (1986), p. 249, note 60.

106. See letter from Lewis Andrews to First Secretary, 10 July 1932, and letter from Arthur Wauchope to Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Colonial Secretary, 22 July 1933, in PRO CO. 733/231/17249. There is also a hint about this Jewish Agency proposal in Shertok's statement at the Jewish Agency Executive meeting on 29 November 1937. See Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini* 1936–38 [Political Diary], Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1971), p. 435.

107. Shmuel Dotan, *The Struggle for the Land of Israel* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: 1981), pp. 76–77.

108. *Doar Hayom* (Jerusalem), 28 April 1930. See also *Sefer Ussishkin* [The Book of Ussishkin] (Jerusalem: 1934), pp. 233–37. The Zionist historian Louis Lipsky wrote of Ussishkin: "There were many obstinate Zionists in the early days but none had his arrogance. He was rude and

despotic, paternal and sentimental....Had he been asked he would have said he could not stomach the Arabs or the English. He ignored them both as long as possible." L. Lipsky, *A Gallery of Zionist Profiles* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1956), p. 74.

109. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , p. 242.

110. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 82.

CHAPTER TWO

The Royal (Peel) Commission, 1937

Because of the Zionist leadership's awareness of the need not to provoke British public opinion, Weizmann's 1930 proposal of transfer to Transjordan remained confined to internal and private talks with British officials. In fact, until 1937, the leadership had largely refrained from airing this sensitive issue and was careful not to support the principle of transfer publicly, despite its importance to the achievement of Zionist goals. According to Simha Flapan, for many years the head of the Mapam party's Arab department, "Schemes for transfer cropped up repeatedly in Zionist deliberations on Arab opposition in Palestine. These plans were suggested as feelers in negotiations with the British, though there was no mention of them in public announcements." [1] For reasons of political expediency, the Zionists calculated that such transfer plans could not be carried out without Britain's support and even actual implementation.

However, as the Zionist leaders grew more confident about the eventuality of Jewish statehood, their approach became more daring. Indeed, despite increasing Arab opposition and resistance to Zionist policies (culminating in the outbreak in April 1936 of what was to become known as the Great Arab Rebellion), Zionism's prospects had continued to improve. Immigration continued to rise with the growing persecution of the Jews in Europe: from 30,000 in 1933 to 42,000 in 1934 to 61,000 in 1935. Thus, between 1931 and 1936, the Jewish population rose from 17.8 percent to 29.5 percent. [2]

Moreover, Zionism had scored several key victories with the British: in February 1931, the Passfield White Paper, so upsetting to the Zionists, had been virtually repealed in a letter from Colonial Secretary Ramsay MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann, and in March 1936, the proposal for a legislative council in Palestine based on parity between Palestinians and

Jews (at a time when the Jews represented less than one-third of the population) was defeated in the House of Commons under Zionist pressure.

By the time the Royal Commission of Inquiry under Lord Peel was appointed in May 1936 to look into the causes of the Arab unrest that had broken out in April, the Zionists felt they were in a position to press ahead with their transfer proposals more forcefully. These plans, submitted from 1937 onwards, represented a new stage in Zionist thinking in the search for a "radical" solution to the "Arab problem."

On 30 March 1936, some months before the arrival of the Royal (Peel) Commission in Palestine, Weizmann's 1930 proposal to transfer Palestine's Arab peasants to Transjordan while extending Zionist colonization there was discussed at a meeting of the Political Committee of Mapai, the dominant party of the Yishuv that was headed by Ben-Gurion. At that meeting, Moshe Beilinson, a leading ideologue, proposed with regard to the fundamental problem of land that the Zionists should demand from Britain "extensive aid for a large development plan, which would enable the evacuation of large Arab tracts of lands for our colonization, through an agreement with the [Arab] fellahin." [3] Dov Hos, a prominent figure both in the Jewish trade union Histadrut and the Haganah, pointed out that the issue raised by Beilinson was intertwined with the question of Transjordan, which ought to be postponed for the time being because it was "a very grave political matter." Ben-Gurion then intervened, stating that he was going to hold talks with the British high commissioner, Arthur Wauchope, about Transjordan and about whether or not the government would give financial aid, or perhaps allow the Jewish Agency to tax Palestine's Jewish population. Ben-Gurion expressed doubts about the talks, however, wondering how the British would respond to Zionist demands during a time of Arab protest. [4]

A few weeks later, shortly after the general strike marking the beginning of the Great Arab Rebellion was called, the transfer issue was again raised at the 19–20 May 1936 meetings of the Jewish Agency Executive, the policy-making body of the Yishuv. Menahem Ussishkin, who had already come out openly in 1930 in support of the concept, declared on 19 May:

> I would very much like the Arabs to go to Iraq. And I hope they will go there sometime.... agricultural conditions in Iraq are better than in the Land of Israel because of the quality of the soil. Secondly, they will be in an Arab state and not in a Jewish state. We cannot remove them from here. Not only because we cannot, even if an exchange has been carried out between the Greeks in Asia Minor and the Turks, between Turkey and Greece. But today they would not accept this.
>
> What we can demand today is that all Transjordan be included within the Land of Israel...on condition that Transjordan would either be made available for Jewish colonization or for the resettlement of those Arabs, whose lands [in Palestine] we would purchase. Against this, the most conscientious person could not argue.... For the Arabs of the Galilee, Transjordan is a province ...this will be for the resettlement of Palestine's Arabs. This is the land problem....Now the Arabs do not want us because we want to be the rulers. I will fight for this. I will make sure that we will be the landlords of this land...because this country belongs to us and not to them.... [5]

It is interesting to note the distinction Ussishkin makes between transfer to Iraq and transfer to Transjordan; whereas the first is seen as compulsory, the second somehow is not, provided Transjordan were included in the Land of Israel. "Resettlement" in Transjordan was considered simply as a move from one province to another, to which "the most conscientious person" could not object. This concept of transfer to Transjordan as being somehow painless and permissible is a recurring theme in Zionist debate.

Iraq, on the other hand, was ruled out as the final destination for the Arab transferees by some of the more fastidious Zionists because of the "compulsion" the transfer would entail. Thus, at the Jewish Agency Executive discussions the following day, Arthur Ruppin, until 1925 head of the Zionists' Land Settlement Department and a relative moderate, stated that he had "come to the conviction and conclusion that there is no way of reaching a peace agreement with the Arabs without abandoning our fundamental demands." Addressing Ussishkin, he then went on to say:

> I also entertained dreams like yours. I once said, Iraq will absorb the Arabs of the Land of Israel and all the peoples of the world would

> recognize our justified demands....But...how could you conceive that Arabs would abandon the Land of Israel and go to Baghdad? What is in it for them?....In Baghdad the fellah receives 3 or 4 piastre as a daily wage. Here the fellah receives 12–15 piastres. There he is living in abject poverty, but not here. Why should he go to Iraq? Is this only because it is an Arab country? In his eyes Palestine nowadays is still an Arab country, and he will still fight for its Arabness...and the condition of the agriculture in Iraq could not be described as the Garden of Eden. [6]

The Origins of the Royal (Peel) Commission's Transfer Recommendation

The Jewish Agency Executive returned to its discussions of transfer, particularly with reference to Transjordan, in its meetings of October 1936, held in anticipation of the arrival of the Peel Commission in Palestine scheduled for the following month. The October meeting also took place against the background of calls from the Palestine mandatory government for legislation to protect minimum landholding for Arab peasants and to impose restrictions on Yishuv land purchases in certain localities. In the debates, a consensus emerged among the Jewish Agency Executive members to oppose any legislation providing protection for Arab tenant farmers. [7] As an alternative to the proposed legislation. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the president of the Yishuv's national council, Va'ad Leumi, a prominent Histadrut and Mapai leader (who later became the second president of the State of Israel), argued in favor of removing dispossessed Arab peasants to neighboring countries, including Transjordan, on a "voluntary" basis. Echoing Weizmann's transfer scheme of 1930, Moshe Shertok, the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, supported Ben-Zvi's stand on the grounds that Transjordan had a large land reserve suitable for Jewish colonization and Arab resettlement. [8]

During the debates, it became clear that the majority of the Jewish Agency Executive members, including Ben-Gurion, Weizmann, Ben-Zvi, Eliezer Kaplan, Shertok, Selig Brodetsky, Efrayim Rottenstreich, and Yitzhak Gruunbaum, favored adopting in principle an undeclared policy to be promoted discreetly in talks with the Royal Commission members.

Summarizing the discussions, Ben-Gurion expressed his doubts that a mass transfer could be implemented even while revealing sympathy for the concept. The Greco-Turkish population exchange precedent was not applicable, he explained, since “We are not a state and Britain will not do it for us...” although “there is nothing morally wrong in the idea.” Arguing in favor of transfer as a policy, he went on:

> If it was permissible to move an Arab from the Galilee to Judea, why it is impossible to move an Arab from Hebron to Transjordan, which is much closer? There are vast expanses of land there and we are overcrowded....Even the High Commissioner agrees to a transfer to Transjordan if we equip the peasants with land and money. If the Peel Commission and the London Government accept, we’ll remove the land problem from the agenda. [9]

The Arabs, Ben-Gurion claimed, would not become landless as a result of Zionist land acquisition; they would be transferred to Transjordan. [10]

In the final vote on 29 October, the majority of the Jewish Agency Executive members endorsed the proposal of a “voluntary” transfer of displaced Arab farmers to Transjordan; only Maurice Hexter and David Werner Senator, two of the four non-Zionist members of the 21-member Executive, opted to dissent. [11] Earlier in the deliberations, Senator had stated that “We cannot say that we want to live with the Arabs and at the same time transfer them to Transjordan.” [12] And although references to “compulsory” transfer were studiously avoided, statements of Ben-Gurion and Shertok showed their awareness that the Palestinian Arabs were unlikely to remove themselves to Transjordan voluntarily.

The Royal (Peel) Commission arrived in Palestine on 11 November 1936. Weizmann was one of the first witnesses to be heard by the Commission-several members of which expressed open sympathy for Zionism. Later, Weizmann described it as “by far the most distinguished and ablest of the investigatory bodies ever sent out to Palestine.” [13] The Commission saw virtually every Zionist leader in Palestine of any importance, in addition to Arab representatives. But much of the Zionists’ lobbying with the Commission-indeed, probably most of it-took place in London, where the

Commission returned in mid-January. Shertok and Weizmann went to London in mid-February, and Ben-Gurion himself, accompanied by David Hacohen and Dov Hos, who had succeeded in establishing close ties with leaders of the British Labor party), arrived in May. [14]

The Zionists were tireless in their efforts to shape the Commission's proposals, meeting not only with the Commission members themselves, but with statesmen, cabinet ministers, members of parliament, and senior officials at the Foreign and Colonial Office with whom the Commission members were likely to consult before formulating their recommendations. [15] At these meetings the idea of a population transfer was promoted in conjunction with the partition of the country, the partition idea apparently was first suggested by a member of the Commission itself, Professor Reginald Coupland, during a private meeting with Weizmann in Palestine. The prospect of official British recognition—hitherto steadfastly denied-of Jewish sovereignty and statehood, even in only part of Palestine, represented a tremendous, and at that stage unhoped for, advance for the Zionist movement.

Given the demographic realities at the time, whatever boundaries might be devised for partition would inevitably result in large numbers of Arabs and even greater expanses of Arab-owned land becoming part of whatever Jewish state would be carved out. Thus, the notion of transfer was a natural concommitant to the partition idea. Evidence suggests that the proposal of Arab transfer that was ultimately made by the Royal Commission originated from, and had been secretly conveyed by, top Jewish Agency leaders, including Ben-Gurion, Shertok, and Weizmann. As early as the Jewish Agency Executive meeting in October, Ben-Gurion had indicated his intention to raise the issue: "if the Peel Commission and the London government accept [the idea of transfer to Transjordan], we will remove the land problem from the agenda." [16] In March, the Jewish Agency conveyed a confidential plan to the Royal Commission through the very same Maurice Hexter who, a few months earlier, had been one of the two dissenters on the vote concerning transfer at the Jewish Agency Executive meeting. Hexter explained that the aim of the plan was to solve the problem of land and Zionist colonization in various districts such as the Hula and Beisan valleys. Under the plan, the British government was to consider proposals submitted

by the Yishuv settlement companies, such as the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA), the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA), and the Palestine Land Development Company (*Hevrat Hachsharat Hayishuv*), all of which were engaged in the purchase of land in Palestine for the collective control of the Jewish National Fund or Zionist private investors. The goal of these proposals, according to Hexter, was "the herding together of the existing Arab villages and their concentration in order to evacuate their territories for Jewish colonization." If the Arabs refused and put up an organized political resistance to sell and evacuate their land, the government would intervene and "force the people to exchange land and move from one place to another." When Hexter was asked by one commissioner whether the proposed evacuated land would be designated for Jewish settlements exclusively, he replied, "our intention is [that they will be] only for Jews." [17]

But unquestionably the most significant proposal for transfer submitted to the Commission—the one destined to shape the outcome of its findings—was that put forward by the Jewish Agency in a May 1937 memorandum containing a specific paragraph on Palestinian transfer to Transjordan. [18] The impact of the memorandum, drafted jointly by Ben-Gurion and Pinhas Rutenberg, can be gauged from an entry in Shertok's political diary on 12 June 1937, almost a month before the publication of the Peel Commission's report. According to Shertok, the American general-consul in Jerusalem, George Wadsworth, had told him at a dinner that British officials had privately indicated that their government was inclined towards partition. Shertok went on:

> We talked about the question of partition in connection with Transjordan. Wadsworth said that it was known to him that the [British] Government was very impressed by the proposal contained in the memorandum that we had submitted to the "Royal Commission" concerning the transfer of the Arabs from Western Eretz Yisrael [i.e., Palestine] to Transjordan in order to evacuate the place for new Jewish settlers. They saw this proposal as a constructive plan indeed. [19]

In fact, the Jewish Agency proposal appears to have been conveyed orally to the Commission members at least two months before the May memo was

presented. Shertok had entered in his diary on 23 March the latest news he heard from Weizmann: “At midnight [Lewis] Namier came to Weizmann and told him about the very secret talks he had held with Professor Coupland.” Coupland, who was to formulate the Commission’s report, had apparently asked Namier if the Jews would be willing to help the Arab state financially, and Namier had answered positively but said that there was no question of helping in cash. According to Shertok, Namier had indicated that “they would be willing to develop certain regions in the Arab state, also for the purpose of population exchange [i.e., Arab transfer].” [20]

Shertok wrote several months later that Reginald Coupland “was our greatest friend on the Royal Commission.” [21] Other Zionist commentators suggested that, thanks to Namier’s friendship with Coupland, “Namier was able to exercise a direct impact on matters of high importance,” [22] a reference to the transfer question.

While secretly lobbying the Peel commissioners to accept Arab transfer to Transjordan, Ben-Gurion and other leading figures in the Jewish Agency maintained contact with Emir Abdallah of Transjordan, in order to persuade him to endorse the proposal. Abdallah, the older brother of Emir Faisal, had been installed as ruler in Amman with British help in 1921 and had remained totally dependent on Britain ever since. Zionist overtures to Abdallah, who was desperate for capital investment in his destitute Emirate, were not new. In a letter to Shertok dated 9 June 1936, Ben-Gurion suggested that “Abdullah be given supreme religious authority over all the Moslems of Eretz Yisrael in return for opening up Transjordan to us.” [23] Moreover, in April 1937 Abdallah had sent tribal leaders to meet Weizmann in Jerusalem and had expressed willingness to accept Zionist settlement in his Emirate.

Ben-Gurion himself arranged the initial contact between Emir Abdallah, who was in London at the time, and Pinhas Rutenberg, who had continued to promote the 1930 Weizmann-Rutenberg plan behind the scenes despite Britain’s rejection of it. Rutenberg began negotiations with Abdallah, who apparently accepted the Jewish Agency proposal, with the aim of setting up a transfer company modelled along the lines of early British and Zionist colonization companies. Its suggested capital was raised to P£2 million

(twice the sum proposed in 1930); half would be used to provide for the resettlement of displaced Palestinian peasants in Transjordan, and the other half would be used for the proposed Zionist settlers east of the Jordan River. [24]

In promoting this Arab transfer- *cum* -Zionist colonization in Transjordan, linked with a potential endorsement of the partition idea by the Royal Commission, [25] Ben-Gurion also helped arrange contacts for Rutenberg with W. Ormsby-Gore, the colonial secretary, and more crucially with Professor Coupland, as well as with the active Zionist financier James-Armand de Rothschild. [26]

There is no question that the transfer concept, now closely tied to the partition idea, was at the very center of Zionist lobbying efforts. But even as these efforts were being pursued, some leaders questioned the wisdom of promoting the partition/transfer proposal. In an address to the Mapai Central Committee on 5 February 1937, Moshe Shertok said:

> First of all, almost 300,000 Arabs will exist under Jewish rule. It is not so easy to carry out [population] exchange....And even if they [the British] indeed would want to uproot the Arab population by force, this would result in such bloodshed that the current Arab rebellion in the country would be almost nothing in comparison. Such a thing could not be done without British forces, at least in the transitional period....It is a big question whether [Britain] would have the courage to carry this out. [27]

In an internal discussion in London on 15 March, at which Weizmann was present, Shertok repeated his doubts about whether the Arabs of Zarnuga and Bayt Dajan, two large villages southeast of Jaffa, for instance, could be persuaded to evacuate their fertile land and prosperous citrus plantations in the coastal plain for dry farming in Transjordan. [28]

Shertok elaborated on his doubts regarding the viability of the proposed Jewish state and the workability of partition in a speech to the Zionist Actions Committee, the supreme policy-making body between Zionist

congresses of the World Zionist Organization (as the Zionist Organization was increasingly called), on 22 April 1937 in Jerusalem:

> The proposed Jewish state territory would not be continuous; its borders would be twisted and broken; the question of defending the frontier line would pose enormous difficulties ....The frontier line would separate villages from their fields...Moreover the Arab reaction would be negative because they would lose everything and gain almost nothing....In contrast to us they would lose totally that part of Palestine which they consider to be an Arab country and are fighting to keep it such....They would lose the richest part of Palestine; they would lose major Arab assets, the orange plantations, the commercial and industrial centers and the most important sources of revenue for their government which would become impoverished; they would lose most of the coastal area, which would also be a loss to hinterland Arab states....It would mean that they would be driven back (“ *Zorkim otam* ”) to the desert....A Jewish territory [state] with fewer Arab subjects would make it easy for us but it would also mean a procrustean bed for us while a plan based on expansion into larger territory would mean more Arab subjects in the Jewish territory.
>
> For the next 10 years the possibility of transferring the Arab population would not be “practical.” As for the long-term future: I am prepared to see in this a vision, not in a mystical way but in a realistic way, of a population exchange on a much more important scale and including larger territories. As for now, we must not forget who would have to exchange the land? Those villages which live more than others on irrigation, on orange and fruit plantations, in houses built near water wells and pumping stations, on livestock and property and easy access to markets. Where would they go? What would they receive in return?...This would be such an uprooting, such a shock, the likes of which had never occurred and could drown the whole thing in rivers of blood. At this stage let us not entertain ourselves with analogy of population transfer between Turkey and Greece; there were different conditions there. Those Arabs who would remain would revolt; would the Jewish state be able to suppress the revolt without assistance from the British Army? [29]

Despite these misgivings, Shertok played an active role in the Jewish Agency's promotion of the transfer proposal. Along with Weizmann, and to a lesser extent Namier, he was instrumental in bringing the Royal Commission to adopt Zionist positions. However, the chief architect of this secret lobbying was Ben-Gurion, who deployed with extraordinary skill a tactic he had used earlier, i.e., getting the British themselves to initiate explosive proposals favorable to the Zionists. The effort with regard to the Peel Commission was soon to bear fruit.

Weizmann, Shertok, and Ben-Gurion and the Peel Recommendations

The Peel Commission issued its report on 8 July 1937 which was accompanied by a statement that His Majesty's government approved the recommendations and considered them to be guidelines of future policy in Palestine. The Commission's main finding was that the national aspirations of Arabs and Jews were irreconcilable. Its principal recommendation was the partition of Palestine into two sovereign states—"the one an Arab state consisting of Transjordan and the Arab part of Palestine, and the other a Jewish state." [30] It further recommended contours of the two states, with the Jewish state to consist of about one-third of the country (at a time when Jewish land ownership was 5.6 percent) encompassing the most fertile parts of Palestine, including the plain of Esdraelon, most of the coastal plain, and the wholly Arab-owned Galilee. The British would maintain enclaves at the port city of Haifa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Tiberias, Nazareth, Acre, and a corridor from Jaffa to Jerusalem. The Arab state would include the remainder of Palestine including the Negev. [31]

The report added specific recommendations for what it delicately called an "exchange" of populations—the some 225,000 Arabs residing in the territory allotted to the Jewish state against the 1,250 Jews living in the territory envisaged for the Arab state. [32] Curiously, with regard to the Galilee, the population of which was entirely Arab, the Commission stated that it might not be necessary to carry out a greater "exchange" of land and population than could be effected on a voluntary basis. But concerning the plains, "it should be part of the agreement [between the prospective Arab and Jewish states] that in the last resort the exchange should be

compulsory.” [33] The transfer was to be carried out with British assistance and the agreement of the Arab state (a condition that would clearly be facilitated by the Commission’s recommendation of union with Transjordan); the question of the voluntary or compulsory character of the proposed evacuation was left deliberately vaque. [34] The Commission’s justification for the proposal and its reference to the Greco-Turkish population exchange precedent echoed arguments used by Weizmann as well as by various members of the Jewish Agency Executive during the debates of 1936.

Not surprisingly, the Royal (Peel) Commission’s recommendations were vehemently rejected by all shades of Palestinian opinion. They further triggered an unprecedented explosion of violence among the Palestinian peasantry in the countryside. The ongoing Arab rebellion, which had been witnessing a lull, intensified. [35] For the Zionists, on the other hand, the Peel Commission represented the first official British recognition of ultimate Jewish sovereignty and legitimized two basic Zionist concepts. First, it endorsed the Zionist interpretation of the Balfour Declaration (i.e., that the “Jewish National Home” meant a Jewish state), and second, it sanctioned the long-sought-after Zionist dream of Arab transfer from such a state.

Weizmann, Shertok, and especially Ben-Gurion had lobbied tirelessly among the members of the Peel Commission for recommendations very much along the lines of those that emerged. Still, political considerations with regard to the Zionist movement at large recommended prudence in supporting the findings too enthusiastically. Thus the Jewish Agency, of which Ben-Gurion was chairman, simultaneously attacked the partition plan in public as a breach of the Balfour Declaration promises (on the grounds that the Balfour Declaration had promised a Jewish home in all of Palestine), while privately seeking to negotiate with the British government for a Jewish state based on more advantageous positions.

Although the outlines of the state recommended by the Peel Commission largely conformed to Ben-Gurion’s own proposals, whatever disatisfaction Weizmann, Shertok, and Ben-Gurion expressed centered on territory. After all, the Jewish state delineated in the recommendations fell far short of the one called for by Ben-Gurion in 1918, which ran from the Litani River in the north, at least to Wadi Arish in the Sinai in the south, and the Syrian

Desert (including the furthest edge of Transjordan) in the east. [36] Nonetheless, all three believed that the reduced state provided by partition was but a temporary expedient, a way station en route to the realization of a way state in the whole of Palestine. Weizmann had said so outright, even as the Peel Commission was deliberating, to no less a person than the British high commissioner himself: “We shall expand in the whole country in the course of time...this is only an arrangement for the next 25 to 30 years.” [37]

But while there was some ambiguity about partition as well as misgivings about contours and dimensions-Weizmann stated that “we [do not] have large tracts of land today in one block” for such a state [38] -the enthusiasm of the three for transfer was unalloyed. Weizmann explicitly stated that transfer was the key to success: partition thus, on 19 July, twelve days after the publication of the Peel Commission report, Weizmann told the pro-Zionist British colonial secretary, Ormsby-Gore, a strong supporter of partition in the British cabinet, that “the whole success of the [partition] scheme depended upon whether the [British] government genuinely did or did not wish to carry out this recommendation [i.e., transfer of the Arab population].” Like many Zionist leaders, Weizmann believed, at this stage, that “the transfer could only be carried out by the British government and not by the Jews. I explained [to Ormsby-Gore] the reason why we considered the proposal of such importance.” [39]

Whatever Weizmann’s own feelings about the willingness of the British to implement a forced removal, he was careful not to advocate compulsory transfer publicly. For one thing, he must have been aware of the statement already made by Ormsby-Gore at the meeting of the League of Nations Mandate Commission in August 1937 ruling out the use of force to transfer the Arabs and expressing the belief that in the end the Arabs would evacuate the Jewish state voluntarily. [40] Weizmann’s delicate diplomacy on this issue was evidenced in a letter to the president of the Permanent Mandate Commission towards the end of 1937:

> My colleagues and I attach great importance to this question, and we do not delude ourselves as to its difficulties... [we] hope that the solution suggested by the Peel Commission [will] not be dismissed out of hand....

> Of course, we do not propose to have recourse to constraint, or to exercise any coercion whatsoever: only those who wish will be transferred, ... but we think that just as, after the conquest of the Caucasus by Prussia, many Muslims preferred to emigrate to Turkey rather than remain under the domination of the “infidels,” so after the creation of the Jewish State, many Muslims and perhaps others will wish to leave. [41]

Despite his warnings to the Zionist Actions Committee in the spring regarding potential “rivers of blood,” Shertok, too, was now enthusiastic about the Peel Commission report’s transfer proposal. Often described by political adversaries as an “appeaser” and “compromiser” with regard to the Palestinian Arabs, he too showed himself ready to fight for maximal amendments to the Peel partition plan. After receiving a telegram about the content of the report, he told participants at a Mapai Center meeting on 5 June in Tel Aviv:

> Many assumptions that have been made by the Commission will constitute very important assets for our political activities. Of these I will point out the matter of the population transfer. The Commission not only does not see something fundamentally wrong in removing people who have lived here for many generations; but it says to the Arabs that if there is a need to move out—they should move out....It points out that after the population transfer between Greece and Turkey, good relations once again prevailed between the two countries. [42]

Some months later, in December 1937, Shertok spoke at a Keren Hayesod meeting:

> Let us not raise difficult questions, when we discuss the partition plan: Why it is impossible to purchase land in Eretz-Yisrael and why it is difficult to transfer Arabs from their places.... The transfer of the Arabs...could be through an agreement. Without an agreement this is entirely impossible. There is no need for there to be an agreement with each and every Arab, but there has to be an agreement with another government. In any event, this would not be by throwing people out

> while their property is being confiscated and without concern for new places for them. [43]

Baldly stated the agreement would be collective but the expulsions individual.

Not surprisingly, Ben-Gurion wholeheartedly endorsed the idea. In his eyes, the transfer recommendation was “a central point whose importance exceeds that of the report’s other merits, and outweighs all the report’s shortcomings.” [44] The importance Ben-Gurion attached not merely to transfer but to forced transfer is seen in his diary entry of 12 July 1937: “The compulsory transfer of the Arabs from the valleys of the proposed Jewish state could give us something which we never had, even when we stood on our own feet during the days of the First and Second Temple”—a Galilee free from Arab population. [45] He believed that if the Zionists were determined in their effort to put pressure on the Mandatory authorities to carry out forced removal, the plan could be implemented. “We have to stick to this conclusion in the same way we grabbed the Balfour Declaration, more than that, in the same way we grabbed Zionism itself. We have to insist upon this conclusion [and push it] with our full determination, power and conviction.... We must uproot from our hearts the assumption that the thing is not possible. It can be done.” Ben-Gurion went so far as to write: “We must prepare *ourselves* to carry out” the transfer [emphasis in original]. [46]

Ben-Gurion was convinced that few, if any, Palestinian Arabs would “voluntarily” transfer themselves to Transjordan, even though the Peel Commission had also recommended that Transjordan be part of the same state. He continued: “I see above all the enormous difficulties in uprooting, by foreign force, some 100,000 Arabs from the [Galilee] villages which they have inhabited for hundreds of years.” [47] While the “enormous difficulties” Ben-Gurion had in mind were of a material rather than moral order, he nonetheless tried to justified the transfer proposal on moral grounds; in a letter to his 16-year-old son Amos dated 27 July 1937, a few weeks after the Peel Commission’s report was issued, he wrote: “We have never wanted to dispossess the Arabs [but] because Britain is giving them part of the country which had been promised to us, it is only fair that the

Arabs in our state be transferred to the Arab portion." [48] Moreover, the northern border with Lebanon—after the forced evacuation of the Galilee's mostly Muslim Arabs—would give an additional advantage to the prospective Jewish state: "This proximity has tremendous political value, because [Christian Maronite] Lebanon and the Jews are both interested in being neighbors. The Christians of Lebanon could hardly exist without a Jewish state alongside them, and we are also interested in an alliance with Christian Lebanon." [49]

A later letter to his son, dated 5 October 1937, shows the extent to which transfer had become associated in his mind with expulsion; the letter is further noteworthy in its implication that the territory allotted to the Jews under the Peel proposals for the construction of their state would later be expanded to include the Negev and Transjordan. Thus:

> We must expel Arabs and take their places...and, if we have to use force—not to dispossess the Arabs of the Negev and Transjordan, but to guarantee our own right to settle in those places—then we have force at our disposal. [50]

In reflecting on such expulsion and the eventual expansion beyond that defined in the Peel Commission report borders to the conquest of all Palestine, Ben-Gurion was clearly counting on Zionist military force. He also predicted a decisive war in which the Palestinian Arabs would not be left to fight on their own. "It is very possible that the Arabs of the neighboring countries will come to their aid against us. But our strength will exceed theirs. Not only because we will be better organized and equipped, but because behind us there stands a still larger force, superior in quantity and quality...the whole younger generation" of Jews from Europe and America. [51] What is remarkable about this letter is that for the first time the idea of transfer was explicitly linked in Ben-Gurion's writings or pronouncements with an eventual—indeed almost inevitable—military confrontation with the Palestinian Arabs. [52]

It is important to note that for Ben-Gurion, as for Weizmann and Shertok, the evacuation of the Palestinian Arabs, or at least most of them, to Transjordan and other neighboring countries was an essential prerequisite

for accepting the Peel Commission's partition plan or, for that matter, any other partition of Palestine. [53] Weizmann had said so quite clearly, albeit with his characteristic tact, to Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore back in July when he remarked that the success of partition depended on whether transfer would be carried out; Ben-Gurion, for his part, stated more than once he would accept the Peel partition plan only if Jews were given complete sovereignty in matters of immigration and transferring the Arabs. [54] Given that the Arabs constituted nearly half the population within the territory proposed for the Jewish state by the Peel Commission, Ben-Gurion knew that even with the massive Jewish immigration that the Jewish Agency was pressing Britain to allow, the Jews would not be able to keep pace with the Arab birth rate if a large indigenous population were left *in situ* Without such a "transfer," therefore the Jewish character and stability of the projected state would be severly undermined. The relationship between partition and transfer was thus crucial, and indeed it was at the core of the intensive debates that unfolded within the highest echelons of the Zionist organizations in the months that followed.

The Emerging Consensus: The Debates at the World Convention of Ihud Po'alei Tzion and the Zurich Congress, August 1937

The Peel Commission's recommendation of Jewish statehood based on the partition of Palestine was too important for the entire future of Zionism not to be debated collectively by the movement's highest bodies. In August 1937, less than a month after the report was issued, the World Convention of Ihud Po'alei Tzion—the highest forum of the dominant Zionist world labor movement—and the Twentieth Zionist Congress were both held in Zurich. Both forums were dominated by the Mapai party, the most influential political grouping in the Yishuv, whose leader, Ben-Gurion, had invested great energy lobbying in the top echelons of both organizations.

The primary issue under debate was whether or not the movement should agree to the partition proposal—whether or not it should accept, even as an interim solution, less than the whole of Eretz Israel for the Jewish state. Yet this decision was closely linked to transfer, for as Ben-Gurion had noted, partition was unacceptable without transfer; the Jews could not accept a

state with such large numbers of Arabs within its borders. Thus began the most extensive discussion of Arab transfer ever held.

In the wake of the Peel proposals, Zionist options with regard to what Weizmann had called a “fundamental” solution to the “Arab problem” had narrowed to two. The first was a maximalist approach rejecting partition while calling for transfer. The second was a pragmatic approach accepting partition on a short-term, tactical basis in exchange for a substantial, though not necessarily total, transfer.

The World Convention of the Ihud Po’alei Tzion opened on 29 July and ran to 7 August, thus overlapping by several days with the World Zionist Congress which opened on 3 August. The debates were extremely important insofar as support expressed by most of the leading delegates for the concept of transfer paved the way for the endorsement of the same principle by a majority of the Zionist Congress delegates immediately afterwards. With regard to partition, on the other hand, the delegates in both forums were deeply divided.

The proceedings of the Ihud Po’alei Tzion Convention were subsequently edited, apparently by Ben-Gurion himself, and published in Tel Aviv a year later under the Hebrew title *‘Al Darchei Mediniyutenu* [55] It is hardly surprising that Ben-Gurion, whose discreet but unflagging promotion of the transfer idea had had such effect in confidential communications with the Peel Commission, spearheaded the efforts at the convention to bring about a general approval of the concept as a prerequisite for the partition solution he so staunchly backed. At this convention, as in other forums, he justified Arab removal politically, morally, and ethically as the natural and logical continuation of Zionist colonization in Palestine. Ben-Gurion and the other delegates took pains to distinguish between transfer and dispossession and between transfer and expulsion, trying as much as possible to purge the words of their more unpleasant connotations or associations. In his speech on 29 July, Ben-Gurion declared:

> In the proposal of transferring the Arab population from the areas [of the Jewish state], if it is possible voluntarily and if not by coercion, it would be possible to expand the Jewish settlement...the Commission does not suggest Arab dispossession; it proposes their transfer and

> settlement in the Arab state. It seems to me unnecessary to explain the fundamental and profound difference between dispossession and transfer. Until now, we have also carried out our settlement by way of transferring the population from one place to another...only in a few places in our new colonization did we not have to transfer the earlier inhabitants....By and large the transfer was arranged through an agreement with the tenant farmers, and only in a few places was there a need for forced transfer. Until now the transfer has been carried out within the Mandatory territory. The basic difference with the Commission proposal is that the transfer will be on a much larger scale, from the Jewish to the Arab territory. If it were possible to transfer Arabs from one village to another within the British Mandate —it is difficult to find any political or moral argument against the transfer of these Arabs from the proposed Jewish-ruled area....And is there any need to explain the value in a continuous Jewish Yishuv in the coastal valleys, the Yizrael [Esdraelon Valley], the Jordan [Valley] and the Hula? [56]

Eliezer Kaplan, another leader of the Mapai party and member of the Jewish Agency Executive—the head of its Finance and Administrative Department and later finance minister in Ben-Gurion's War Cabinet of 1948 —likewise downplayed the "forced" element and indeed made transfer appear as a kind of humanitarian gesture, moving the Arabs to the "environment of their own people." Thus in the debate of the following day, he stated:

> I shall not enter now into the details of the question of the "transfer" of the Arabs. But it is not fair to compare this proposal to the expulsion of Jews from Germany or any other country. The question here is not one of expulsion, but of organized transfer of a number of Arabs from a territory which will be in the Hebrew state, to another place in the Arab state, that is, to the environment of their own people.... [57]

Other members of the convention favored the idea of transfer but doubted its feasibility. Yosef Bankover, a founding member and leader of the Kibbutz Hameuhad movement and a member of the Haganah regional command of the coastal and central districts, said on 30 July:

> Ben-Gurion said yesterday that he was prepared to accept the [partition] proposal of the Royal Commission but on two conditions: [Jewish] sovereignty and compulsory transfer.... As for the compulsory transfer—as a member of Kibbutz Ramat Hakovesh [founded in 1932 in central Palestine] I would be very pleased if it would be possible to be rid of the pleasant neighbourliness of the people of Miski, Tirah and Qalqilyah. [58]

Bankover, an opponent of partition, pointed out that the Commission had emphasized the need for an agreement with the Arabs and that the Arabs would never voluntarily leave their fertile lands in Palestine for the poor Transjordan. He questioned whether the Royal Commission really committed itself to compulsory transfer, or whether "Ben-Gurion's statements [were] merely a figment of his imagination...I searched and found nothing about any commitment on the part of the Royal Commission for forced transfer." In his view, Britain would not force the Arabs to leave because this would cause uprisings throughout the whole Arab East. "The example they bring us of the population transfer carried out in Greece and Turkey is not comparable. Because there they were forced to leave the country, otherwise they would have been slaughtered." [59]

The debates at the convention revealed a general endorsement of the "moral" justification of the transfer concept. The differences centered on the question of "compulsory transfer": whether such a course would be practicable at the present juncture and whether a forced mass transfer would be sufficient compensation for accepting the reduced Jewish state called for under the Peel Commission's partition plan. Some of those who opposed partition feared that the transfer of Arabs from the Jewish state next door would compromise future possibilities for expansion: for this reason some delegates favored an eventual transfer farther away to Syria and Iraq. Berl Katznelson, for instance, the most important Labor leader to oppose partition, viewed it as an inadequate *quid pro quo*. In a speech on 2 August, he declared:

> The matter of population transfer has provoked a debate among us: Is it permitted or forbidden? My conscience is absolutely clear in this respect. A remote neighbour is better than a close enemy. They will

> not lose from being transferred and we most certainly will not lose from it. In the final analysis, this is a political and settlement reform for the benefit of both parties. I have long been of the opinion that this is the best of all solutions, and in the days of the disorders [the 1936–39 Arab revolt] I was strengthened in my convictions that this must happen one day. But it never crossed my mind that the transfer "to outside the Land of Israel" would mean merely to the vicinity of Nablus. I have always believed and still believe that they were destined to be transferred to Syria or Iraq. [60]

Another opponent of partition was the Ahdut Ha'avodah delegate Aharon Zisling, a leader of the Kibbutz Hameuhad movement who later became agriculture minister in the Ben-Gurion-led 1948 cabinet representing the newly formed Mapam party. His argument provides further insight into the link in socialist Zionist thinking between the transfer concept and the doctrine of Jewish-Arab separation. "I do not contest our moral right to propose population transfer. There is no moral flaw in a proposal aimed at concentrating the development of national life. On the contrary: In a new world order it can and should be a noble human vision...." [61]

But Zisling did express reservations regarding forced transfer in the immediate future on practical grounds. In his view, given regional conditions, a forced transfer could result in all-out war with neighboring Arab states.

> They are talking here [at the convention] about forced evacuation, but the Commission report explicitly stated-twice-the need for an agreement. [Delegates] are saying an agreement with the collective and coercion of the individual...but the individual Arab will hold on to this country with his fingernails...the use of force will be the only option left to us: an evacuation with "automatic rifles."...This would be a war indeed. [62]

Instead, Zisling thought, transfer would become more feasible at some time in the future. "The possibility of population exchange would become more reasonable and realistic between a united Jewish Land of Israel, some time in the future, and Iraq and other Arab countries, through the transfer of their Jews to the Land of Israel." [63]

Acceptance of transfer on moral grounds combined with reservations concerning feasibility was expressed by a great many delegates. Golda Meyerson (later Meir) a member of Ben-Gurion's Mapai party who was also a leader of the Hebrew trade union, Histadrut, was among those who opposed partition but supported transfer even while doubting its feasibility and practicability: "I, too, would want the Arabs out of the country and my conscience would be absolutely clear. But is there a possibility" of its implementation without Arab consent and British assistance? [64]

Another leading Mapai figure, Va'ad Leumi chairman David Remez, who had been for thirteen years secretary-general of the Histradrut, believed that transfer was "certainly a just and fair solution," but, he "could not see the force that could carry it out." [65] The same viewpoint was expressed by Berl Locker, one of the early theorists and organizers of Po'ale Tzion, who was elected as a member of the Zionist Executive (1931–35 and again in 1945). He stated: "I do not raise any moral objections. If suitable land will be ensured for the Arab transferees, no injustice will have been done to them...however, the question is whether it is possible to uproot and re-plant tens of thousands of peasant families against their will." [66] Shlomo Lavi, a prominent kibbutz leader, observed that "The demand that the Arabs should move out and evacuate the place for us, because they have sufficient place to move to and we have no place....is very just and very moral—but in this situation now, we would not be able to present it to the political world as a serious claim, and against our will we have to come to terms with partition." [67]

Some did not appear to consider the ramifications. Advocates of transfer Eliahu (Lulu) Hacarmeli, a Haifa-born Oriental Jew and a member of the National Committee of the JNF, for example, did not hesitate to demand forced removal. He was once private secretary to Aaron Aaronsohn—the early advocate of Palestinian transfer to Iraq who had raised the issue privately at the 1919 Paris peace talks—and had become the leading "representative" of Oriental Jews in the Mapai party and the Yishuv National Council.

> As for the transfer—the painful and the terrifying question—first, I say: "Do not be too righteous," secondly, we could also have the

> following proposal, of course with the agreement of those concerned: in neighboring Arab countries, Mesopotamia, Syria, Arabia, and the Yemen, there are today 100,000 Jews. In return for the land that the Arab emigrating from the Land of Israel will sell, he will purchase estates in Mesopotamia. And that country, which consisted in ancient times of tens of millions of Assyrians and Babylonians and flourished during the Baghdad Caliphate, will flourish again by concentrating the Arab people in it....In return, our distant brothers whom I represent in this assembly, will return to this country....
>
> Even if we want to examine this exchange according to any socialist program we will be justified in all senses....This transfer, even if it were to be carried out through compulsion—all moral enterprises are carried through compulsion—we will be justified in all senses. And if we negate all right to transfer, we would need to negate everything we have done until now: the transfer from Emek Hefer [Wadi el-Hawarith] to Beit Shean, from the Sharon [coastal area] to Ephraem Mountains etc.
>
> They claimed here that the transfer is a political provocation. There is no provocation in it. This is a just, logical, moral, and human program in all senses. [68]

On the other hand, Arye Tartakover, a sociologist who was also secretary of the Hitahdut, a Labor Zionist party which existed from 1920 to 1932, likewise raised the issue of impact of transfer on the Oriental Jews, but reached opposite conclusions. Thus he wondered

> whether attention was also paid to the question of transfer from the viewpoint of the future Jewish settlement in countries of the Near East? Is not there a danger that if we establish the principle of a nation-state purged of its national minorities, that then they may use the same principle against us in Arab countries surrounding the Land of Israel and no foothold will be given to us there? Is this not too high a price to pay in order to get rid of a few dozen of thousands of Arabs from the Hebrew state? [69]

The Twentieth Zionist Congress, held from 3 to 21 August 1937, which opened before the debates at the Labor convention were concluded, represented wider Zionist political groupings and parties including the General Zionists, the Mizrahi World Movement, and the Hapo'el Hamizrahi religious parties. The issues for discussion were partition and transfer, as they had been at the Labor Convention. Weizmann and Ben-Gurion led the camp in favor of partition, for which transfer was seen as a precondition. Weizmann declared that transfer provided one of the clearest advantages of the partition proposal [70] and spelled out the latest version of the resettlement plan worked out with Rutenberg in London the previous spring. Ben-Gurion, like the other Labor speakers, mainly repeated the arguments he had used at the Ihud Po'alei Tzion convention a few days earlier. Again emphasizing that transfer had been practiced all along in an effort to minimize whatever objections to the concept might be raised, he stated:

> Was the transfer of the Arabs ethical, necessary and practicable?....Transfer of Arabs had repeatedly taken place before in consequence of Jews settling in different districts. [71]

Golda Meyerson, too, reiterated the position expounded at the earlier convention. Thus, according to the stenographic report of the Twentieth Zionist Congress, she "was strongly opposed to partition. [Nonetheless] she was in favour of transfer, as the Arabs had vast territories, in which the Arabs of Palestine could settle." [72]

As was the case at the Ihud Po'alei Tzion convention, reservations to the idea of population transfer centered not on the concept itself but on the possibilities for implementing it in the present circumstances. One Mapai leader, Yosef Baratz, said: "I myself, do not believe that we would be able to transfer all the 300,000 Arabs....However I assume that part of them we will transfer." But although he questioned the extent to which transfer could be implemented, he did not question its morality. Baratz's remarks on the subject were addressed to the Kibbutz Haartzi Shel Hashomer Hatza'ir [73] delegates, among the only delegates to the Congress to denounce the plans to uproot the Arabs as "dangerous" and "anti-socialist." [74] Baratz stated:

> Isn’t it evacuation which has been continuing our work in the country for the last 40–50 years? Didn’t we transfer Arabs from D’ganya, Keneret, Merhavya, and Mishmar Haemek? I do remember the nights on which Shmuel Dayan [the father of Moshe Dayan] and I were called to Merhavya to help “Hashomer” [a paramilitary organization of Zionist settlers established in 1909] ...carrying out [Arab] evacuation. What was the sin in that?...I also know that even before the proposal of a “Hebrew State” [the partition proposal] appeared, a plan had already been worked out by one Jewish colonization company to transfer Arabs from known villages in the Galilee to Transjordan....Why is artificial commotion being created around this matter?
>
> Members of Hashomer Hatza’ir are saying: by the establishment of a Hebrew state we are creating a barrier between us and the Arabs. Isn’t such a barrier already existing and permanent in the country? Aren’t we building exclusive train stations, an exclusive post service, exclusive government office, an exclusive sea port, exclusive roads, and an exclusive economy as far as possible? [75]

It might be noted here that Baratz’s argument that transfer was but a logical extension of the Zionist colonization process would be a frequently recurring theme in Zionist debates. As a founding member of Dganya, the first Zionist communal settlement (kibbutz) in Palestine, he had witnessed such “transfer” first hand: Dganya was set up on the shores of Lake Tiberias in 1910 on 3,000 dunums of Arab land purchased from absentee landlords, resulting in the displacement of the village Umm Juni. The settlement of Merhavya, to which he also alluded in his speech, resulted in the displacement of the Arab village al-Fulah, which according to the 1922 census had 563 inhabitants. [76]

Like most of the other groups represented at the Congress, the General Zionists were divided on the question of partition but relatively of one mind with regard to transfer. Naftali Landau, representing the Alliance of General Zionists of Eastern Galicia, spoke in favor of considering a better partition scheme. “They must stipulate that the state offered should be large enough to accommodate big immigration during the next 15–20 years. They must also insist on the transfer of the Arabs.” [77] “Without transfer we would not be

able to carry out our plan....We must not give up transfer. On the contrary, it is our duty to demand it from England and the League of Nations." [78] Rabbi B.S. Brickner, of the General Zionists of the United States, also advocated uprooting and relocation: "The attempt of population transfer involves, of course, many difficulties, and it is a matter of great responsibility. But after all, we only want to transfer the Arabs from one place to another in their same country of residence so that a wide way will be opened to our systematic colonization." [79]

Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise, the president of the Zionist Organization of America and known as a liberal, condemned the partition proposal but read to the Congress a telegram from a Christian sympathizer of Zionism, Rev. J.H. Holmes, stating that "there is analogy between the Turkish and Greek populations and the proposed transfer of Arabs, for they feel at home." [80]

Zionist Executive member Dr. Moshe Glickson, the liberal editor of the *Ha'aretz* daily newspaper and ideologist of the General Zionist party in Palestine, opposed partition mainly on the grounds of the practical problems involved in transfer.

> We all see the major defect in the proposed partition plan in the fact that the future Jewish state will have a large Arab minority....A heavy fog rests over the question of transfer; it is no wonder that amongst us there are enthusiasts who believe that it is possible to remove hundreds of thousands of Arabs from the Jewish state practically while standing on one leg. Dr. Weizmann, who is more cautious than many who support his [transfer] proposal, is maintaining here that in his opinion it would be possible to transfer during 20 years 100,000 Arabs to the Arab state, i.e., 5,000 per year. From the point of the possibilities of Jewish settlement, certainly this is also an important thing; but from the point of population between Jews and Arabs this will not have a great value. Five thousand per year is only a small part of the Arab natural growth. But there are those who believe in the possibility of a wholesale and complete transfer during a very short time—and this is an illusion...secondly the evidence of population exchange between the Greeks and Turks does not apply....From the beginning there wasn't any exchange or agreement, but victorious Turkey simply forcibly

> removed a large number of Greeks from Anatolia, and only after this had been carried out did the agreement come: a *diktat* agreement with vanquished Greece. Dr. Weizmann told us about a plan to set up a fund for large [Arab] resettlement. The Jews will contribute to this fund one million Palestine pounds, and two million Palestine pounds will be given for this purpose from the savings of the Mandatory treasury—again from Jewish money. It seems to me that at the end of the day many "swallowers" of the resettlement fund money will be found, but not many Arab *fellahin* who are ready to leave the Jewish state will be found. [81]

The question of the financial cost of Arab relocation, together with other issues still unclear regarding partition, were raised by Professor Selig Brodetsky, a member of the Zionist Executive and the president of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. [82] His views were in line with the general mood of the Congress: to turn down the proposed partition scheme while not rejecting the transfer concept on moral grounds, and at the same time to negotiate with the British in order to clarify issues related to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The relationship between partition and transfer in the Congress's dynamic takes an interesting twist in the position adopted by Menahem Ussishkin, the president of the Twentieth Zionist Congress, permanent president of the WZO's Zionist Actions Committee, and chairman of the vitally important Jewish National Fund. Ussishkin strongly opposed partition, viewing it as a reduction in the Jewish people's birthright to all Palestine. At the same time, he had always been a passionate and outspoken advocate of Arab removal from Palestine, not merely to Transjordan but to distant Iraq. He felt no need to justify Arab transfer by linking it to partition and to the strategic advantages it offered, as Ben-Gurion had sometimes done. He argued for removal in its own right. In a speech at the Conference of the General Zionist party held in Tel Aviv in January 1937, for example, he argued:

> There was a time when private property was a sacred thing. The owners of large estates comprising hundreds of thousands of hectares entertained no fear that their estates might be diminished in order to

> provide land for those peasants who were totally landless. Times have changed, however. In all parts of the world a process of parcelling off large estates and making them available for the landless peasants is going on. The same principle applies not only to individuals but to nations as a whole. The Arab people have immense areas of land at their disposal; our people have nothing except a grave's plot. We demand that our inheritance, Palestine, be returned to us and if there is no room for Arabs, they have the opportunity of going to Iraq. This should have been, in my opinion, our argument; for all expert technical testimony will lead nowhere. [83]

At the Twentieth Zionist Congress, however, he seized upon the difficulty of implementing transfer to argue against partition. While his true objection to partition was his insistence that the Jewish state must occupy no less than the whole of Palestine and Transjordan, he preferred in this debate to capitalize on the practical difficulties of transfer, especially given the Weizmann-Ben-Gurion camp's insistance on transfer as a *sine qua non* for partition.

> When I heard the speech of the head and the foremost person in our movement...Dr. Weizmann on the transfer of 300,000 Arabs from the Jewish State...I said to myself: O God in heaven, how wide this [partition-cum-transfer] psychosis has spread amongst our greatest men!... Why should Muhammad all of a sudden leave our country? First is there any hope that the Arabs who live in our country will agree, voluntarily, to hand over those millions of dunums to us? [84]

In the end, the Twentieth Zionist Congress adopted by a large majority a resolution, similar to the one recommended by the World Convention of Ihud Po'alei Tzion while declaring partition unacceptable, empowered the Zionist Executive and the Jewish Agency Executive to negotiate with the British government to clarify specific terms of the British proposal for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. [85] For a multiparty coalition of delegates—including Katznelson, Tabenkin, Ussishkin, and Rabbi Meir (Bar Ilan) Berlin (head of the Mizrahi World Movement, and a member of the executive of the Jewish National Fund and the Yishuv's National Council)—even the removal of 300,000 Arabs from the proposed Jewish

state did not represent sufficient compensation for accepting the reduced borders recommended by the Peel Commission. Rabbi Meir Berlin summed it up: “The basis of Zionism is that the land of Israel is ours and not the land of the Arabs, and not because they have large territories, and we have but little. We demand Palestine because it is our country.” [86]

Despite the linkage between transfer and partition stressed by Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, the rejection of partition should in no way be interpreted as a rejection of transfer: On the contrary, the debates at both conventions show that most Zionist leaders endorsed the idea in principle, with reservations centering on the problems of implementation in light of the well-grounded assumption that the Arabs would not leave on their own. Moreover, the defeat of the partition plan in no way diminished the determination of the Ben-Gurion camp, which occupied a pivotal position in the Jewish Agency and the Yishuv, to continue working for the removal of the native population from the land they planned to transform into their state.

The Soskin Plan of Compulsory Transfer, 1937

One of those who took part in the Twentieth Zionist Congress was Dr. Selig Eugen Soskin, who had formerly occupied the powerful position of director of the Land Settlement Department of the JNF and who had been affiliated with the Revisionist party. A supporter of partition, [87] he was inspired by the Congress discussions to draft a memorandum outlining a detailed plan for the transfer of the Arab population.

The memorandum, drafted in English and entitled “To the Members of the Political Commission of the XXth Zionist Congress,” [88] begins by describing the background of the proposal. Before leaving Zurich on 10 August, Soskin “had the privilege to discuss with Dr. H. Weizmann the question of the Jewish state, called ‘Partition’ of Palestine. I especially stressed on the necessity of the ‘Exchange of Land and Population’ proposed by the Peel Commission and termed by themselves as the most important and most difficult of all the questions which partition involves.” Soskin went on to explain that “the suggested ‘exchange of land’ is not an exchange but the only opportunity to create the land reserve or the land fund which is a

condition sine qua non for the formation of the Jewish state." Echoing Ben-Gurion's position, Soskin stated that Arab transfer "should be compulsory not only in the plains, as the Peel Commission urges, but in the hill-country as well, where the majority of the Arab rural population dwell." [89]

Having served as an agronomist with the Palestine Land Development Company together with Aaron Aaronsohn, Soskin had long been preoccupied with land issues. As director of the JNF's Land Settlement Department, Soskin had travelled widely to investigate conditions needed to settle large numbers of people in limited areas. He had advocated the employment of intensive agricultural methods, stressing in particular the importance of hydroponics in view of the limited agricultural potential of the Yishuv. He was instrumental in founding Nahariyah, which at the time was a settlement of small farms with intensive cultivation to the north of Acre.

Soskin wrote in his memorandums that the removal of the Arabs from the land—which he deemed an indispensible condition for the establishment of the Jewish state—would have to be accompanied by the creation of a Land Fund. This would "enable the settling of masses of Jews on national land, which is the main task of the new state. Purchasing land in the open market is a very slow and very expensive process unthinkable in a new state." [90] That being the case,

> I therefore insist upon the compulsory transferring of the *whole rural Arab population* [emphasis added], from the Jewish State into the Arab State. It is a preliminary step to the up-building of the Jewish State. At this stage the statesmen concerned with this question will understand the necessity of this demarche....
>
> In our case the rural population shall be formed by the [Jewish] immigrants. The natives have to free the land as it was done in the case of the Turks and Greeks in Macedonia and Asia Minor....
>
> The exchange of land and population, alias the transferring of the Arab rural population, must be done with the greatest speed possible. This is a revolutionary act which has to be finished in the shortest time. The transferring of the Arabs by such numbers in a long period shall not

> have the desired effect of freeing the country from the heavy burden of a second class citizen and cheap producers. Besides, the small numbers suggested [by the Peel Commission] will be made up by the natural increase in numbers through their economic development under Jewish rule.
>
> The [re-] settling of the Arab rural population must be presented as a great humanity work. Tenants shall become freed from the exploitation of the effendis, small owners shall receive land divided in separate independent lots. [91]

Like Ben-Gurion, Soskin believed that mass Arab removal would solve the problem of "Hebrew Labor" by eliminating the cheaper "Arab labor" (‘Avodah ‘Aravit) in the Jewish economic sector; it would also eliminate the cheaper Arab agricultural produce and markets competing with those of the Yishuv. His plan envisaged that the Arab land expropriated at a fixed price from the large landlords and from the *fellahin* would constitute the Land Reserve or Land Fund for Jewish settlements. The tenant farmers would be transferred to new land in the Arab state. [92]

Furthermore, according to the plan, a special "Commission for Settling the Arabs" with Arab and Jewish representatives would be nominated. "Members of the Commission will proceed to Transjordan with the object of selecting vast stretches of land for colonisation of the Arabs, while other members will simultaneously make, with the help of the present administration, a survey of the numbers of people to be transferred and the areas becoming available for Jewish colonisation." Large new Arab villages would be built in Transjordan. "The preparatory work will be done on the new land [in Transjordan] by Jewish agronomists, engineers, and mixed labour-Jewish and Arab, the latter taken from the villages of the transferred. Jewish tractorists will plough the soil, Jewish engineers will plan the new villages, dig wells, construct new roads, build houses, etc., using for this purpose Arab labour." [93]

Soskin estimated that 40,000 Arab families, or 250,000 Arabs, living on the land of the proposed Jewish state would be transferred.

> If we take only 50 dunams of land as an average size of the holding of an Arab family, we must arrive at the figure of at least 2,000,000 dunams being worked by the present Arab population in the future Jewish state. 1,250,000 dunams are in Jewish possession, about the same area being regarded at present as not cultivable, there remains another 500,000 dunams under towns and as waste, etc., land. It is clear from these figures how important it is to get land for Jewish settlement by both means: transfer of Arabs and reclamation of not yet cultivable lands. [94]

The cost of this transfer operation was roughly estimated at P£200 per Arab family; "this amount of money being spent on land acquisition from the Emir Abdullah and Sheiks [*sic*] of the Bedui [*sic*]—tribes in Transjordan, Abdullah becoming a millionaire in pounds sterling, which will make him the most powerful amidst the Arab kings. The land should cost P£2 per dunam, each family receiving 50–100 dunams and Abdullah the sum of £3–4 million." The remaining sum would be spent on building houses and roads, and digging wells, and so on. The total cost of the scheme was estimated at about P£10 million, 40 percent of which was to be paid to Abdallah's pocket, 10 percent "for land bought compulsory from Effendis," another 10 percent for general expenses of the operation, and the remainder for settling the transferees. The Jewish state would acquire 2 million dunums of private Arab land, which "will cost approximately £5 per dunam, which is a trifle" compared with the prices on the open market. "Land in Nahariah [*sic*] costs already now £17–20 per dunam." The transfer cost would have to be borne by both the British government and the Jewish state and "a substantial part of this money will be spent on Jewish work in the colonisation scheme for the Arabs, where thousands of Jewish engineers, architects, labourers will be busy."

Soskin's transfer plan concluded as follows:

> From the above statement and suggestion, it is clear that the Jewish state is unthinkable without compulsory transfer of the Arabs to the Arab state in the shortest time possible, the main advantages being:

- formation of a Land Fund for colonisation of Jews;

- exclusion or at least control of speculation in land;
- creation of securities for raising loans;
- last but not least social and economic possibilities for a large Jewish rural population, which otherwise will dwindle down to an artificial experiment of limited size, the Jews forming mostly the town population and the Arabs mostly holding the land. [95]

Soskin reworked his ideas in a memorandum entitled “Exchange of Land and Population” that was submitted to Moshe Shertok after the latter became involved in the Population Transfer Committee that was formed under the impetus of the Twentieth Zionist Congress. He also incorporated the gist of the scheme in a draft memorandum on practical proposals for the implementation of transfer submitted in May 1938 to the Woodhead Commission, the technical commission the British government sent to Palestine as a follow-up to the Peel Commission. [96]

Notes

1. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 82.

2. Khalidi, Walid. *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians 1876–1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984, 1991), p. 86.

3. Cited in Heller, *Bama’vak Lemedinah* [The Struggle for the State], p. 117.

4. Ibid., p. 118.

5. Ussishkin also stated that the frontiers of the Land of Israel stretched from the “great sea” [the Mediterranean] to the Euphrates and were not the Balfour frontiers. These wider frontiers are clearly “drawn on the wall map of my Jewish National Fund Office.” See Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive’s meeting on 19 May 1936, confidential, no. 57, CZA, 25/3, pp. 28–29; Ussishkin repeated his support for transfer at the JAE meeting six

days later (25 May). See A. Ruppin, *Pirkei Hayai* [My Life and Work], Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 1968), p. 261.

6. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting on 20 May 1936, in Heller, *Bama’vak Lemedinah* [The Struggle for the State], pp. 140–41.

7. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 260. At a meeting of the Zionist Actions Committee, on 13 March 1945, Ben-Gurion was equally opposed to agrarian reforms that might result in transferring lands from Arab landlords to landless peasants, CZA, protocol of the meeting, S25/1787.

8. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 260, citing Protocols of the Executive meeting.

9. Ibid., p. 261.

10. Ibid., p. 222.

11. Ibid., p. 261.

12. Ibid., p. 260.

13. Cited in Raphael Patai, ed., *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* (New York: Herzl Press/McGraw-Hill, 1971), p. 878.

14. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 254–55.

15. Ibid., pp. 246–47.

16. It was not coincidental that at the time when the Royal Commission was in Palestine the memoirs of Akiva Ettinger, an agronomist who headed the Land Acquisition Department of the Jewish National Fund from 1926 to 1936, were published. In his memoirs, Ettinger, who had gone many years earlier on an investigative tour to Iraq, implicitly called for the transfer of the Palestinians to Iraq. He also continued to propagate the idea for many years to come. Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895–1947* , p. 32.

17. Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , Vol. 2, a statement at a meeting of the Zionist Actions Committee, 11 February 1937, Jerusalem, pp. 16–17.

18. Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4 (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 1974), pp. 173, 175, 207.

19. Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , Vol. 2, pp. 187–88.

20. Ibid., p. 91.

21. Ibid., entry for 26 September 1937, p. 344.

22. *Commentary* , March 1962, p. 240.

23. David Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders* , (New York: The Third Press, 1973), p. 82.

24. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , p. 254.

25. Ibid., pp. 254–55.

26. Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, pp. 200–202.

27. Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , p. 15.

28. Ibid., p. 70. The participants included Professor Brodetsky, Lewis Namier, Leonard Stein, A. Lourie, Maurice Perlzweig, and Mrs. Dugdale.

29. Protocol of the meeting of the Zionist Actions Committee, 22 April 1937, CZA, 25/277; also Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , Vol. 2, pp. 105–10. Shertok’s repeated use of the term “ *netenim* ” (subjects) instead of “ *izrahim* ” (citizens) is not insignificant.

30. Peel Commission Report, Cmd. 5479, p. 381.

31. Ibid., pp. 376–89.

32. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 181.

33. Peel Commission Report, Cmd. 5479, pp. 389–91. This figure excluded the commission's estimate of 71,000 Arab inhabitants of the towns of Tiberias, Safad, Acre and Haifa which according to its plan would remain temporarily under the British Mandate and would come eventually under Zionist control.

34. Ibid., p. 391.

35. See the memo of J.S. Bennett of the Colonial Office, 26 February 1941, PRO, CO. 733/444, 75906.

36. In 1918 Ben-Gurion described the future Jewish state frontiers as follows: to the north, the Litani River; to the northeast, the Wadi 'Owja, twenty miles south of Damascus; the southern border will be mobile and pushed into Sinai at least up to Wadi al-'Arish; and to the east, the Syrian Desert, including the furthest edge of Transjordan. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , pp. 34–35.

37. Weizmann in a private conversation with the High Commissioner, A. Wauchope, 14 March 1937, cited in Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , Vol. 2, p. 67.

38. Cited in Norman Rose, "The Debate on Partition 1937–38," *Middle Eastern Studies* 6, no. 3 (October 1970), p.300.

39. See Weizmann's statement in the *Jewish Chronicle* (London), 13 August 1937; Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, p. 307.

40. J.M.N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (London: Longmans, Green, 1939), p. 665.

41. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XVIII, no. 168, pp. 186–87.

42. Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , Vol. 2, 5 July 1937, p. 239. On receiving the Commission report Shertok wrote to Ben-Gurion saying that one of the most important paragraphs of the report was "the forcefulness in which they present the matter of population transfer"; see ibid., 4 July 1937, p. 235.

43. Ibid., speech at the Keren Hayesod meeting on 21 December 1937, Jerusalem, pp. 447–48, 450.

44. Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, p. 297.

45. Ibid., pp. 297–99.

46. Ibid., p. 299. Also Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 182.

47. Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, p. 299; Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 181.

48. Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, pp. 330–331; Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 182. Ben-Gurion maintained that he would reconsider the advocacy of compulsory transfer in return for the inclusion of the Negev within the proposed Jewish state.

49. Ibid. Two days later, on 29 July, in a speech to the World Convention of Ihud Po'alei Tzion in Zurich, Ben-Gurion maintained that multi-confessional Lebanon, ruled by the Maronites who were in a minority, and surrounded by a sea of Muslim Arabs, would have no future without the support of a neighboring Jewish state. "Having Lebanon as a neighbor ensures the Jewish state a faithful ally from the first day of its establishment. It is not, also, unavoidable that across the northern side of the Jewish state border in southern Lebanon the first possibility of our expansion will come up through an agreement, in good will, with our neighbours who need us."

50. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 189, citing Military and Defence Establishment Archives, Giva'tayim. A censored version of the letter may also be found in David Ben-Gurion, *Michtavim el-Pola Vehayeladim* [Letters to Pola and the Children] (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1968), pp. 212–13.

51. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* , p. 189.

52. The likelihood of such an eventuality was repeated by Ben-Gurion at the Jewish Agency Executive meeting on 20 June 1944, and in his speech at the 22nd Zionist Congress at Basle, December 1946. See David Ben-Gurion, *Bama'arachah* [In the Battle], Vol. 5 (Tel Aviv: 1950), pp. 133–37. At the 1946 Basle Congress forcible transfer also found advocates among the delegates.

53. See for instance Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, p. 365; Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* , pp. 260–1.

54. Ibid.

55. *Al Darchei Mediniyutenu: Mo'atzah 'Olamit Shel Ihud Po'alei Tzion (c.s.)—Din Vehishbon Male 21 July–7 August* [A Full Report about the World Convention of Ihud Poelei Tzion, C.S.] (Tel Aviv: The Central Office of Hitahdut Poa'lei Tzion Press, 1938).

56. Ibid., pp. 72–73.

57. Ibid., pp. 82–83.

58. Ibid., p. 93.

59. Ibid., p. 94. Another delegate, Y. Idelson, pointed out that the number of Greek evacuees from Asia Minor was several times greater than that of the Turks who left Greece and that this had taken place after Turkey defeated Greece militarily; the Greeks agreed to leave only because of the "threat of physical extermination." But the Yishuv would not be able to remove the Arabs forcibly because the world would not accept this. Ibid., p. 107.

60. Ibid., pp. 179–80. Katznelson thought that it was ridiculous merely to propose, as the Jewish Agency did, that Arabs be transferred to Transjordan and that Jews be allowed to settle there.

61. Ibid., pp. 116–17.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., pp. 122–23.

65. Ibid., p. 168.

66. Ibid., pp. 133–34.

67. Ibid., p. 100.

68. Ibid., p. 122.

69. Ibid., p. 132.

70. *Hacongress Hatzioni Ha'esrim, 3–21 August 1937—Din Vehishbon Stenographi* [Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress, Zurich, A Stenographic Report]. Organization Executive Press, Jerusalem, 9 August 1937, pp. 70–72, hence forthward *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress.*

71. As reported in the *New Judea* (London) XIII, nos. 11–12 (August–September 1937), p. 220.

72. Ibid., p. 224; *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , p. 148.

73. This kibbutz federation, founded in 1927, was based on ideological collectivism and publicly advocated a binational state in a united "Land of Israel." Later, from 1948 onwards, it became the political mainstay of the Mapam party.

74. *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , pp. 42, 142, 211. Ya'acov Hazan, its co-leader, reportedly "doubted whether it would be possible to transfer the large numbers of Arabs to their own state." *The New Judea* , p. 219. Abba Hillel Silver, an American Zionist leader, rejected the partition scheme as unworkable and "the transfer is impracticable and cannot be justified on moral grounds." Ibid., p. 222. In essence, however, Rabbi Silver, did not question the fundamental assumption of mainstream Zionism that the Palestinians were a people without national rights in Palestine. Several years later, while addressing the United National Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, he declared: "There has never been a politically or

culturally distinct or distinguishable Arab nation in Palestine. Palestine dropped out of history after the Arab conquest and returned as a separate unit only after the League of Nations gave international recognition to a Jewish national home in the country." *United Nations Weekly Bulletin* , 14 October 1947. In fact, Silver supported the Ben-Gurion transfer plan in the mid-1940s.

75. *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , 8 August 1937, pp. 124–25; also *The New Judea* , p. 221. It is unclear what plan for transfering Arabs from the Galilee to Transjordan Baratz was referring to, or what company had developed it. The company may have been the Palestine Land Development Company (*Hevrat Hachsharat Hayishuv*).

76. Many years later Moshe Dayan himself referred to some of these cases of displaced Palestinian farming communities in the Esdraelon Valley, also known as Marj Ibn 'Amer, in the following words: "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist, not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal [Dayan's own settlement] arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis; and Kefar Yehushu'a in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population." (Address delivered at the Technion institute of technology) Haifa, as quoted in *Ha'aretz* , 4 April 1969). Furthermore, on the displacement of Arab tenant-farmers, see Baruch Kemerling, *Hama'vak 'Al Hakarka'ot* [The Struggle for Land] (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1973), p. 22, and the Hope-Simpson Report of 1930 in Cmd. 3686, pp. 17, 56, 133, 135. The "compensation" paid by the Zionist Commission to the 8,000 displaced tenant-farmers of 22 villages bought from the absentee landlord Sursok in the 1920s came to three pounds ten shillings per head. Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London: Collins, 1965), p. 119.

77. *The New Judea* , p. 224.

78. *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , 9 August 1937, p. 154.

79. Ibid., p. 160.

80. *The New Judea* , p. 225.

81. *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , 9 August 1937, p. 164. By scrutinizing the reference of delegates to each other's speeches, it is clear that the protocols were edited as far as sensitive details and prickly statements were concerned.

82. Ibid.

83. As reported in *The New Palestine* (New York) 27, no. 5 (5 February 1937), p. 3, "Why I Did Not Testify" (before the Peel Commission).

84. *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , 10 August 1937, p. 188.

85. This majority included most of the American Zionists, most of the General Zionists, and the entire left camp of Zionism including Hashomer Hatza'ir, Ahdut Ha'avodah and much of the Mapai party. The Hashomer Hatzair delegates were the only ones to condemn the transfer concept on both moral and practical grounds. The Congress resolutions are cited in *Encyclopedia Judaica* , Vol. 13 (Jerusalem: 1971), p. 35.

86. Quoted in Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948* , p. 274.

87. See a reference to Soskin's views in Ussishkin's speech on 10 August, in the *Protocols of the 20th Zionist Congress* , pp. 188–89.

88. The memorandum, signed S. Soskin, is undated but appears to have been drafted after the closing of the Congress. S25/247, CZA.

89. See Soskin's memo, "To the Members of the Political Commission of the XXth Zionist Congress," S25/247, CZA.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. See Soskin's May 1938 memorandum, "Exchange of Land and Population," S25/10060, CZA.

CHAPTER THREE

The Jewish Agency and Transfer in the Wake of the Peel Commission

While the Twentieth Zionist Congress had rejected the Peel Commission's partition plan, it left the door open for further discussions on the subject by empowering the Zionist Executive to enter negotiations on the precise terms of the proposed establishment of a Jewish state. In anticipation of future dealings, then, the Jewish Agency began forming a number of advisory committees on various issues relating to the Peel Commission's recommendations. One of these was the Population Transfer Committee appointed in November 1937.

As explained by Moshe Shertok to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, whose political department he headed, the Transfer Committee was established in accordance with the Twentieth Zionist Congress resolutions of August calling for a follow-up to the Peel plan. [1] It was Shertok who appointed the Committee, which included an impressive list of prominent Yishuv leaders and settlement and land purchasing executives. The chairmanship of the committee was entrusted to Ya'acov Thon, since 1921 the managing director of the Palestine Land Development Company, and who had been instrumental in the purchase of the Jezreel Valley. Eliahu Epstein (later Elat), the head of the Jewish Agency's Near East and Middle East Division, was secretary of the Committee. [2] Other members included legal expert Bernard Joseph (later Dov Yosef), top official of the Jewish Agency's Political Department (who later became an Israeli cabinet minister); Fritz Simon of the JA's Political Department; Alfred Bonné of the

JA's Institute for Economic Research; 'Aminadav Eshbal, the director of the Jerusalem office of the Palestine Land Development Company; Yosef Weitz, the director of the Jewish National Fund's crucially important Land Department; and Weitz's colleague Yosef Nahmani, the land-purchasing director of the JNF in the Galilee District. [3]

During 1938, several important leaders of the Yishuv joined subcommittees of the Transfer Committee: Shertok himself, Eliezer Kaplan, Arthur Ruppin, and Avraham Granovsky (later Granott), for many years managing director and later chairman of the JNF. Three of the Yishuv's senior executives on the subcommittees were David Stern, of the Volcani Station for Agricultural Research in Rehovot, 'Oved Ben-'Ami, a representative of the Yishuv Jewish Farmer Federation, and Zalman Lifschitz, a member of the JNF Executive. [4]

The Weitz Transfer Plan, December 1937

The first meeting of the Transfer Committee was held on 15 November 1937, but the group only got down to serious business with the second session on 21 November, held in the "Weizmann room" at the Jewish Agency offices in Jerusalem in the presence of Thon, Eshbal, Weitz, Epstein, Simon, Bonné, and Dr. Kurt Mendelson from Holland, presented as a theoretical "expert on the question of population transfer from one country to another particularly from Turkey to Greece." [5]

Weitz opened the meeting with a 30-minute presentation in which he outlined the plan he had devised for Arab population transfer. Weitz explained that his plan was based on two main assumptions. The first was that

> the transfer of Arab population from the area of the Jewish state does not serve only one aim—to diminish the Arab population. It also serves a second, no less important, aim which is to evacuate land presently held and cultivated by the Arabs and thus to release it for the Jewish inhabitants. [6]

It was for this reason that Weitz, like Soskin and most Yishuv figures involved with the practical problems of colonization, believed that in the first stage the transfer of the Palestinian peasants and rural population should take precedence over the evacuation of the Arab townspeople, “even if their transfer would be more difficult than that of the towns-people.” [7]

The second assumption on which Weitz based his plan was that “transfer could not be carried out by force, because such a force does not exist.” Weitz had drawn the obvious conclusion from Britain’s apparent backing off from the “compulsory transfer” clause, articulated by Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore to the Leaque of Nations Mandate Commission within a month of the Peel Commission report. Nonetheless, transfer could be implemented if certain conditions were created; these conditions included political and international agreements between the parties concerned and economic inducements for the Arab transferees.

Weitz’s blueprint gave special attention to “three categories” of Arab rural population to be cleared out in the first stage:

1. tenant farmers; [8]

2. Landless villagers working as agricultural laborers or in other economic sectors;

3. Farmers who owned less than 3 dunums per capita.

He calculated that there were 87,300 Arabs belonging to these categories in the proposed Jewish state:

1. 18,000 from the coastal districts, including Jaffa, Ramle, Tulkarm, and Gaza, to be removed to the Gaza district in the Arab state;

2. 13,000 from the Hula region and the hills of Upper Galilee, to be removed to Syria;

3. 53,000 from other parts of the Galilee and other districts of Acre, Tiberias, Nazareth, Haifa, and Safad, to go to the mountainous and hilly regions of Transjordan in the districts of Ajlun and Balka;

4. 3,500 from the Beisan Valley to be relocated to the Transjordanian side of the Jordan Valley. [9]

In total, Weitz calculated that 1,150,000 dunums would have to be purchased (mostly in Transjordan) for the resettlement of these transferees. This resettlement would have to be carried out "according to orderly and standard plans and with little...money." "If we are considering this operation as land redemption, then every dunum [we get in Palestine] on average will cost us approximately P£12." [10] Under this plan the Arab population was to be reduced by 87,000; in addition, "with little effort this number could be increased by the transfer of 10–15,000 Bedouins who are living on livestock, which means that the Arab population will be diminished by a third and the land property of the Jews will be increased by 680,000 dunums, of which 180,000 dunums will be irrigated lands." [11]

Weitz explained that he had worked out only a partial transfer plan for this stage in order to achieve the maximal practical benefit from the scheme with the "aim of reducing the [Arab] population by a third in two to three years." [12] The committee chairman, Ya'acov Thon, agreed that Weitz had been wise to be practical and keep the committee members within the required framework; the plan could be a starting point for the future work of the committee. Moreover, in Thon's view, the theoretical debate on partial or complete transfer and the numbers of proposed transferees was less important at this stage than the "right" practical method used to tackle the question. Nonetheless, he felt that Weitz's figures would have to be examined because they did not tally with the figures of his own Palestine Land Development Company. According to those figures, 20 percent of the Arab population in the proposed Jewish state were tenant farmers, as opposed to Weitz's estimate of about 40 percent. All available figures in the Zionist institutions would have to be collated and compared in order to determine on what basis the committee would operate and draw its conclusions. [13]

Bonné, who had been assigned by the committee to study the financial and procedural aspects of the transfer operation, declared that "in his opinion all the Arabs must be removed in 10 years." [14] According to the committee protocols, "He began from the assumption that it was very desirable to carry

out maximum Arab transfer, and was not satisfied from the outset in a partial solution." [15] Concerning procedure, Bonné wanted to clarify the issue of "compulsory" transfer, even if the final decision on this matter would be in the hands of the Jewish Agency Executive. He went on:

> The arguments for and against compulsion have to be stated in detail. It is essential not to give up easily the proposal of "compulsion," which was suggested not by Jews but by the English. It is obvious, however, that we are not talking about "compulsion" in the full meaning of the word. We are interested in cooperation as much as possible, helped by the exertion of pressure. [16]

Bonné proposed that the transfer procedure be linked with the introduction of new agrarian legislation by the Jewish state. Another important procedural question was how to determine the pace of transfer, the numbers of the Arab transferees, and which regions should be targetted first. Bonné thought that the process and the means required would vary in accordance with whether the transfer operation was to last five years or a shorter period. Bernard Joseph agreed with Bonné that partial transfer was not sufficient; although Weitz was justified in differentiating among the various categories of the Arab population, "it is not enough to deal only with the question of tenant farmers and Bedouins. A transfer plan must be worked out regarding the rest of the categories of the Arab population." [17] Weitz's own account of the meeting reveals that both Bonné and Joseph wanted to use force to achieve the complete evacuation of the entire Arab population. [18]

Eshbal suggested that the studies on the social structure of the Palestine Arab population done by Eric Mills for Britain's *1931 Census of Palestine* could be utilized as important material for the committee. [19]

> By dividing the Arab population into proper categories, we would be able to know for the purpose of transfer who should come earlier and who later.... Together with the land cultivators, it is essential to transfer the residents directly or indirectly dependent on them. The Acre region is one of the most difficult of all from the standpoint of population transfer because of the type of Arabs who own small landholdings.

Eshbal also proposed to collect material on the landowning peasants and the size of their landholding. [20]

Shertok followed the works of the Transfer Committee closely, and forwarded his comments on the Weitz plan to Dr. Bernard Joseph in a letter dated 13 December 1937. He found two major “flaws” in the plan. The first was that the plan envisaged removing the landless and the small landholding peasants from the Arab villages as a first stage. In Shertok’s view, this would be counterproductive: peasants constituted an integral part of the village and carried out essential economic functions, their removal would create a vacuum that would immediately be filled by the immigration of poor Arabs from the neighboring countryside, thus creating an endless cycle. Furthermore, Shertok argued, the landholdings of such categories were scattered in small tracts that would be difficult to concentrate into viable blocs. [21] Left unstated by Shertok, but spelled out by other committee members at later meetings as well as at the Jewish Agency Executive deliberations of June 1938, was the obvious remedy: to effect Arab removal by whole villages.

Ben-Gurion and Weizmann were also kept informed of the committee’s discussions and plans. Yosef Weitz noted in his diary on 3 April 1938 that Avraham Hartzfeld, a prominent Labor and settlement leader and member of the Zionist Actions Committee from 1921 onwards, had told him that Ben-Gurion, just back from London, had mentioned discussing with Weizmann a plan of Arab transfer from the north of Palestine to Transjordan, and that “Weizmann attaches great importance to this.” [22]

In between general sessions of the Transfer Committee, work proceeded within two transfer subcommittees that had been set up at the close of the 21 November meeting. The first, to deal with questions of procedure and finance, was composed of Thon, Bonné, Mendelson, and Granovsky (who had written several books on land problems and land taxation in Palestine). The second, responsible for collecting material on Arab population and landholding, was composed of Weitz, Nahmani, Eshbal, and Epstein.

At discussions within the subcommittee for procedure and finance, Dr. Mendelson added his voice to those stressing the need for the government

of the Jewish state to apply administrative and legal measures such as agrarian legislation to precipitate an Arab evacuation. [23] Thon reiterated the need to transfer the Arab peasantry in order to enable the Jewish state to absorb large numbers of new immigrants. [24] A meeting of the subcommittee on Arab population and landholding, which met on 5 December 1937, discussed the possibility of dispatching some of its members to the al-Jazirah district in northeastern Syria as part of its investigation into the destination and resettlement of the proposed Arab transferees. [25]

Early in 1938, the Population Transfer Committee asked the Mandatory authorities to allow it to copy all the material existing in its land registration and tax offices relating to the situation of Arab agriculture and land ownership in Palestine. [26] Thon, the committee chairman, was granted permission and the Palestine Land Development Company promptly set about collecting the material. This work, a monumental task involving "copy[ing] the registration of 400,000 [land] units in 400 villages," was expected to employ a staff of 20 persons for three months. The cost of the work was estimated by Thon at P£500, of which the Jewish Agency Political Department was prepared to contribute the sum of P£200; it was suggested that the Jewish National Fund and the Palestine Land Development Company each contribute P£150. Justifying the outlay of these funds to Avraham Granovsky, managing director of the JNF, Fritz Simon of the Transfer Committee wrote in a letter dated 23 February 1938 that

> the value of the material which we will be receiving in this way is not only important in connection with the questions that will arise after the impending arrival of the Technical Commission from England. But this will also constitute the basis of our agrarian policies in the future. I am certain that the sum which you will invest in this project is not big in proportion to the benefit that the JNF will get from this important material. [27]

Apparently in response to the Committee's search for material, the Station for Agricultural Research in Rehovot submitted to the Jewish Agency Executive a detailed memorandum dated 3 June 1938 on Arab land ownership and population within the territory of the Peel-proposed Jewish

state, signed by three members of the Transfer Committee (Weitz, Volcani, and David Stern). [28]

Meanwhile, in follow-up to the Peel Commission report, the British government had decided in January 1938 to send a technical commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Woodhead to look into the practical aspects of implementing the proposals contained in the Peel Commissions report. From the terms of reference of this second commission, which arrived in Palestine in April, it was clear that the British government was having second thoughts about the Peel Commission's recommendations, especially the one concerning compulsory transfer. Thus, the British cabinet policy statement that had been published in January's brief along with instructions to the Woodhead Commission stated the need

> to make it clear that H.M.G. are in no sense committed to that [Peel's] plan and in particular that they have not accepted the recommendation of the Commission for the compulsory transfer in the last resort from the Jewish to the Arab area of Arabs... [29]

It was against this background that the Yishuv's Transfer Committee held another meeting on 27 May, a month after the Woodhead Commission arrived in Palestine. Because of the seriousness of the situation, Shertok himself assumed the chairmanship, and the meeting was attended by Eliezer Kaplan, Arthur Ruppin, Avraham Granovsky, Yosef Weitz, Alfred Bonné, Zalman Lifschitz of the JNF, David Stern of the Volcani Station for Agricultural Research in Rehovot, and Fritz Simon. [30]Shertok explained that the Woodhead Commission had urgently invited five memoranda, including one on the question of transfer, and that the Jewish Agency already had a memorandum regarding a transfer to Transjordan that "had been prepared by an expert." However, "we have to present to the commission wider horizons" in the direction of transfer to Syria and Iraq. Granovsky noted that the "how and where" of population transfer had to be addressed, including the question of compulsion, which had been removed from the agenda by the British government. In his view, the destination of the transferees, the question of where, "is a financial and settlement question...we can add more material to what we already have, but in any

event we must not confine ourself to Transjordan: we have to talk about Syria and even Iraq." [31]

Ruppin, on the other hand, thought that while the material that had been collected on transfer to Transjordan "satisfies, more or less, the scientific requirements, the rest of the material concerning Syria, Jazirah, and Iraq is bordering on conjecture." In response, Bonné pronounced that "the material in our hands on Syria and Iraq is not less valuable than the material used by the governments of Syria and Iraq when they come to carry out settlement projects for Bedouins....In my opinion, we can use it without hesitation." [32] Kaplan agreed, stating that the question of "where" should precede the "how." He proposed that Zalman Lifschitz should work on the material collected regarding transfer to Transjordan and Syria. As for the question of "how," he thought that it was important to take into account the "question of agrarian reform which we have suggested as one of the factors to encourage Arabs to transfer voluntarily." [33]

Given that Britain had formally distanced itself from the "compulsory" transfer clause of the Peel Commission report, the Transfer Committee members sought to formulate administrative and legislative measures aimed at bringing about a de facto Arab evacuation without openly advocating forcible removal. The need for further preparations and a subtle approach necessitated once again a division of labor among committee members. Bonné and Lifschitz were assigned to explore further the question of "where" (transfer destination), while Kaplan and Simon were to tackle the question of how to bring about transfer. [34]

Notwithstanding the British government's retreat on the compulsory transfer issue, the committee members persisted in their belief that a large-scale evacuation of the Arab population could not be achieved without strong pressure combined with substantial financial inducements. Granovsky, for instance, believed that an evacuation could only be compulsory and "that it would be possible to transfer all the Arabs to the Arab state and to purchase their whole land property of approximately 3 million dunums. If we assume that the average price will be P£8–9 per dunum then P£25–30 million will be needed." [35]

The Bonné Scheme, July 1938

The Transfer Committee's discussions of the Weitz's proposals prompted one committee member to formulate a new plan attempting to address some of the questions and comments that had been raised, with particular reference to the financial implications of the transfer. Bonné of the Jewish Agency's Institute for Economic Research, a leading expert on the procedural and financial aspects of Arab transfer, advocated a complete and forcible evacuation. His plan was contained in a confidential memorandum drafted in English and sent to Ben-Gurion on 27 July 1938 under the title "Transfer of the Arab Population." [36] The memo (the gist of which may have been forwarded to the Woodhead Commission) made reference to "the questions of principle involved in the problem (compulsory or not compulsory, scale of state participation in the scheme, land reform, etc.)," but it provided no discussion of these points.

The memorandum cited the Mandatory authorities' figures with respect to Arab population in 1936 in the proposed Jewish state as follows:

Towns	77.497	26.34%
Rural	217.334	73.66%
	294.831	100%

By estimating the rural increase and taking into account the "enlarged Peel Area," the memo arrived at a figure of 251,000 souls for the rural population alone at the end of 1937. These were classified as follows:

Owners and peasants	64%	160,000
Agricultural laborers	16%	40,000
Others	20%	50,000
	100%	250,000

According to the Bonné scheme, "the actual details of transfer...must depend on conditions of land ownership, differences in quality of soil and its suitability for form of cultivation." Bonné estimated that "the class of

peasants which will be least difficult to deal with will probably be the farmers possessing land on a considerable scale" because the selling price would provide sufficient capital to establish a new farm.

> In a plan which has as its object the transfer of actual Arab farmers...it is evident that in the event of a transfer of population the labourer, artisan, teacher, breeder, etc., is bound to find-even in such cases where he owns a few dunams—a similar means of livelihood as he did in his old village, without it being necessary to provide him with land or farming stock....
>
> More intricate is the problem of dealing with the tenant-peasant and the peasant with small land property not sufficient to give him livelihood. It seems that both categories must fall within the scope of the transfer schemes. But whereas there exist total figures concerning the *size* of the holdings, no exact data are available regarding the actual number of *tenant* farmers. To avoid unjustified claims, it would be important to use as a reliable point of departure for calculating and putting claims of compensation and resettlement the registered land ownership only. It is evident that even in the case of providing peasant owners as well as tenants with new farms and land, no claim can be put forward by the tenant to obtain land in ownership; a new *tenure* contract—apart from the compensation—would suffice to meet his requirements. However, in order to approach the problem on as comprehensive a scale as possible, the present owners and peasants must be considered as one class. If we now take the categories of (2) and (4) [regular peasants and growers of fruit-trees, gardeners, etc.], we arrive at a figure of approximately 26,000–27,000 as the number of families to be included in the scheme. [37]

Briefly outlining the "approximate [financial] costs of transferring [and resettling] 26,000 Arab fellah families outside the area of the Jewish state," Bonné arrived at the figure of P£ 5,980,000. He regarded this estimate as elastic: an increase of 20 percent in the number of families to be transferred, for example, would bring the total cost to P£ 7,176,000. In these calculations, no provisions were made for agricultural laborers, artisans, breeders, teachers, etc., since "as already stated, it is to be assumed that

some of the agricultural workers would be employed by their former landlords."

Bonné suggested that Britain might be prepared to contribute towards "the provision of funds necessary for the purchase of land in Transjordan and other neighbouring countries and the actual cost of resettlement," if the Arab state proposed in the Peel Commission report could not contribute. Bonné went on:

> The question of finding a proper way to materialize efficiently the transfer of these Arabs who will have to their credit as fair amount of money for their land...is an intricate one. The crux is to discover a modus operandi which will satisfy both Jewish and Arab viewpoints. The aim of the transfer is to secure the exemption of land owned by former cultivators; the disposal of land in itself does not lead to the essential purpose. The only condition on which Jews are obviously prepared to compensate the landowner for his land and the tenant for the renouncement of his rights...is that the latter actually vacate the area intended for the Jewish state. In all such transactions, it must, therefore, be made clear that payment for the land and compensation for the surrender of tenants' rights depends on a simultaneous move-over to the Arab state, or failing this, on a written declaration to the effect that the party or parties concerned are prepared to move at a given time.
>
> ...Cash transactions should be restricted to the minimum as between buyer and the individual farmer in order to leave the former with some means of bringing pressure to bear on the outgoing Arab farmer. It will be therefore necessary to combine the selling procedure with the resettlement transactions in such a manner that resettlement with its advantages will take place only if certain conditions, as, for instance, the corresponding number of people belonging to the same group leaving their former areas. The proposal made by Dr. Ruppin, to carry out the transfer as per village and not per individual farmers, is from this point of view very important. [38]

Regarding the question of purchasing Arab land in the prospective Jewish state, Bonné proposed that the amount required should depend on "the

fixation of land prices." "If it will be possible to purchase land beneath market price...for instance, £ 6–8 for irrigable [dunum] and £ 3 for regular Arab land, we may arrive at 5–6 million pounds for cultivable and at 3–4 million pounds for cultivable but not irrigable land." He added that mention should be made of the fact that in Greece land was compensated at one-tenth of the market price. [39]

In concluding his memorandum, Bonné stated that his figures could not be considered exact but were intended only to give an "indication of order of the magnitude of financial transactions involved." As to the creation of an apparatus to carry through the transfer, he stated his intention to address this in a second memorandum. [40]

The Jewish Agency Executive's Transfer Discussions of June 1938

The Woodhead technical commission of inquiry arrived in Palestine in April 1938 to look into the feasibility of the Peel Commission recommendations and, more particularly, to study the optimum boundaries for the Arab and Jewish states proposed by that Commission, with a view to assuring the minimal number of Arabs in the Jewish state and vice versa. Despite the uncertainty that already surrounded the Peel Commission's findings, especially with regard to transfer, the Zionist leaders forged ahead with their private discussions regarding the manner by which the Arab population might be removed.

Back in November 1937, Moshe Shertok had reported to the Jewish Agency Executive on the establishment of the Population Transfer Committee as an advisory body, and he explained that the group's debates and recommendations would be conveyed by his Political Department to the Executive to assist in its own deliberations on the issue. [41] This was indeed the case, and when the powerful Jewish Agency Executive held its next meetings during the second week of June 1938 (the same week in which Ben-Gurion and Shertok were interviewed by members of the Woodhead Commission), transfer was a major item on the agenda.

The JAE meetings, which took place against the backdrop of escalating events in Eastern Europe, opened on 7 June. David Werner Senator wanted to discuss the future status of a potentially "substantial Arab minority" that might remain in the Jewish state despite efforts to encourage transfer "in light of the experience we have in Europe with substantial minorities." [42] But Ben-Gurion, who never considered the possibility of an Arab minority as an integral part of a Jewish state requiring long-term plans for integration, delayed addressing the issue: "We cannot discuss the status of a minority without knowing the political and territorial framework of the state." Besides, "in the Jewish state the Arab minority will go and diminish." Ben-Gurion then put forward a "line of actions," entitled "The Zionist Mission of the Jewish State":

> The Hebrew State will discuss with the neighbouring Arab states the matter of voluntarily transferring Arab tenant farmers, workers and fellahin from the Jewish state to neighbouring states. For that purpose the Jewish state, or a special company ... will purchase lands in neighbouring states for the resettlement of all those workers and fellahin.... The state engagement in transferring the Arabs to neighbouring Arab states voluntarily, while encouraging Jewish immigration and endeavouring to settle migrant Jews [in their place]...is not tantamount to discrimination. [43]

The term "voluntary" did not mean a free choice for the individual transferees; rather it referred to an agreement with neighboring Arab countries. Ben-Gurion explained that the "starting point for a solution of the Arab problem in the Jewish state was the negotiation of an agreement" with neighboring countries that would ensure the removal of the Arabs from the Jewish state. He further made clear his support for the establishment of the Jewish state in part of Palestine only as an intermediary stage. He was not

> satisfied with part of the country, but on the basis of the assumption that after we build up a strong force following the establishment of the state—we will abolish the partition of the country and we will expand to the whole Land of Israel.

When asked by Moshe Shapira, a Jewish Agency Executive member and director of the JA's Immigration Department, whether he considered that such population dislocation and expansion should be carried out by "force," Ben-Gurion replied that the Arabs would come to terms with Zionism only when faced with a *fait accompli* :

> This is only a stage in the realization of Zionism and it should prepare the ground for our expansion throughout the whole country through Jewish-Arab agreement....the state, however, must enforce order and security and it will do this not by moralizing and preaching "sermons on the mount" but by machine-guns, which we will need. [44]

At the deliberations on 9 June, Ben-Gurion read out a message from Dr. Efrayim Rottenstreich, the head of the Jewish Agency's Department of Trade and Industry, who could not attend the meeting due to illness. Rottenstreich wrote that in view of the events in Czechoslovakia with its substantial German-speaking population, the Yishuv leadership must seek ways of solving the Arab demographic and national problem. "In my opinion we must insist on the Peel Commission proposal, which sees in transfer the only solution to this problem. And I have to say that it is worthwhile that the Jewish people should bear the greatest material sacrifices in order to ensure the success of transfer." [45]

While there was a general consensus within the Jewish Agency Executive concerning the need to push for the transfer solution, discussions on 9 June (and on 12 June) focussed as well on practical means for promoting Arab evacuation. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, president of the Yishuv's National Council, Va'ad Leumi, who had spoken out in favor of transfer at the Executive meetings of October 1936, thought that an Arab exodus could be engineered through legal measures aimed at controlling and supervising the acquisition of Jewish state citizenship during a fixed transitional period. [46] Ben-Gurion proposed that government monopoly should be maintained over the buying and selling of land. Shertok, meanwhile, stressed the importance of the period of transition into a Jewish state:

> The critical problem is parliamentarism in the Jewish state and in the transition period to it.... It is necessary that an institution of provisional

> government should be set up, and one of its functions will be to prepare the parliamentary regime. In this transition period also we will know who are the Arabs who would agree to remain as citizens of the Jewish state and their number would certainly be much smaller than we think today. By the reduction of the Arabs on the one hand and Jewish immigration in the transition period on the other, we will ensure an absolute Hebrew majority in a parliamentary regime. [47]

On 12 June the transfer discussions lasted the entire day, occupying two joint sessions of the JAE and the Zionist Actions Committee, the supreme policy-making body of the World Zionist Organization between the congresses. Shertok reported to the delegates on the discussions he and Ben-Gurion had held with the Woodhead Commission a few days before. He recounted that the commissioners considered it unfair that the Jewish state should take what belonged to the Arabs, such as the fertile orange groves and rich commercial enterprises, without giving anything in return to the poorer Arab state. “We [Shertok and Ben-Gurion] replied: If assistance will be given by the Arab state to transfer the Arabs from the Jewish state to its territory [in Transjordan] and help settle them there, then we will pay something in addition to the land price.” In reply to a comment made by a commissioner that Transjordanians walk 30 kilometers to reach a water well, “we said in any case there is a poor population there and if resettlement from Palestine will take place this very fact will bring new blood to that country.” Shertok said that he had told the commissioners that the Jewish Agency would submit to them a memorandum to show how this relocation could be carried out in practical terms. [48]

During the afternoon session, the need to bring about wholesale evacuation was again a prominent theme. The majority was clearly in favor of one form or another of collective forced removal, with differences of opinion expressed on the issues of “voluntary” or “compulsory” transfer and on whether the removal should be carried out with or without British army assistance. Even Werner Senator, a non-Zionist and prominent member of the by-then defunct Brit Shalom and one of the two dissenting voices in the JAE October 1936 vote on Arab transfer to Transjordan, declared:

> We must aspire to a maximal transfer. If we can ease the general problem by transfer then this must be very desirable and we must convince the [technical] commission as far as possible that this is a very important thing. [49]

Shmuel Zuchovitzky (later Zakif), a leading figure in the agricultural sector and a member of the General Zionist Party Executive, pronounced: “I think that whenever you discuss it or submit a memo on the question of transfer, you must make it absolutely clear that this transfer is one of the conditions on which we are establishing our state and that the Mandatory government should carry this out.” Zuchovitzky rejected the notion that the transfer process should last 10-20 years; it should be done speedily and with a “strong hand.” He went on:

> I am convinced that it would be impossible to carry out transfer without compulsion. I do not see in this any immoral measure. I want to help the Jews to come to the Jewish state and to help the Arabs to cross to the Arab state. I know that these things are not so easy and involve a lot of difficulties .... And also [land] expropriation must be carried out. And we must suggest now that we are prepared to carry out [land] expropriation. In Lita and Latvia there was also expropriation. Latvia finished the whole thing in two years and now everything is all right. But we will carry out confiscation with money and not a small amount. But it must be implemented as speedily as possible. [50]

Yehoshua’ Suparsky, the leader of the General Zionists in Palestine and member of the Zionist Actions Committee, stated that “in the near future, by intensified Jewish immigration into the Land of Israel and simultaneously [promoting] gradual exodus of part of the Arabs, we will be an overwhelming majority in the Land of Israel to the extent that the question of a minority here will be like the Poles in Czechoslovakia and not like the question of the Sudaten Germans there.” [51] Echoing Ben-Gurion’s and Ben-Zvi’s proposals earlier in the debates, Suparsky also proposed that by supervising citizenship of the state in the transitional period, imposing agrarian legislation aimed at confiscating large Arab land estates and preventing the Arabs from buying land in the country “a large part of the

Arabs will leave the land of Israel." He went on to elaborate on the question of forcible removal:

> We have already discussed this question during the debate on the [transfer] memo. There were those who said that we must insist in this sense on the outlook of the Royal Commission regarding compulsory transfer and not on the latest decision of Ormsby-Gore when he dispatched the [technical] Commission to the Land of Israel. Of course it is difficult to declare this in light of our reality now... We have to be cautious and to take account of this situation. It is difficult to say now in our memo to the [Woodhead Commission] that we vehemently insist on compulsory transfer. This will not create an echo now and it is difficult to hope that we will in fact be granted such a verdict on compulsory transfer. We must, however, insist in principle on compulsory transfer without insisting now on the speedy implementation of this principle. We must say in our memos that the outlook of the Peel Commission was justified and that what the [British] government did later was mistakenly done.... We are demanding from the Mandatory government a permission for all sorts of laws...which will enable us to carry out the transfer voluntarily and gradually. And they must support us in this regard. [52]

Unlike Suparsky, Ussishkin was categorically opposed to partition. But like Suparsky, he believed that Arab evacuation, which he had been advocating for many years, could only be implemented by a strong hand:

> We cannot begin the Jewish state with a population of which the Arabs living on their lands constitute almost half and the Jews exist on the land in very small numbers and they are all crowded in Tel Aviv and its vicinity...and the worst is not only that the Arabs here constitute 50 percent or 45 percent but that 75 percent of the land is in the hands of the Arabs. Such a state cannot survive even for half an hour.... The question is not whether they will be a majority or a minority in Parliament. You know that even a small minority could disrupt the whole order of parliamentary life.... Therefore I would say to the Commission and the government that we would not accept a reduced Land of Israel without you giving us the land, on the one hand, and

> removing the largest number of Arabs-particularly the peasants-on the other before we come forward to take the reins of government in our lands even provisionally.

Like a number of Zionist leaders, Ussishkin believed that the Yishuv would not be able to carry out a forcible transfer, since international public opinion would oppose it:

> But if you ask me whether it is moral to remove 60,000 families from their place of residence and transfer them to another place.... I will say to you that it is moral.... I am ready to come and defend the moral side of it before the Almighty and the League of Nations.
>
> Only the British government could carry out the forcible removal and for this two things are required: a strong hand by England and Jewish money. As far as the money is concerned, I am certain that if England will use a strong hand the Jewish money will be found. We will approach world Jewry at large and say that we must remove from here 60,000 Arab families in order to release land for the Jews and for this millions are needed in the form of loans or contributions .... I am talking about a transfer to Transjordan and not to the Arab state west of the [River] Jordan. [53]

The more moderate Arthur Ruppin, on the other hand, was willing to accept the proposed Arab state, rather than Transjordan, as the destination of the transferees: “It is very desirable that we should transfer 100,000 Arabs to the Arab state.” [54] As for a larger number, he considered it to be a difficult task to carry out. Ruppin put forward a “voluntary” transfer scheme that contained certain elements from the Weitz and Bonné plans. According to Ruppin’s plan:

> a. The transfer should be based on an agreement with the British and the Arab state.
>
> b. The British government should give a loan to a “Development Company” for the resettlement of Arab evacuees in Transjordan.

> c. A distinction should be made between landowners and tenant farmers. Owners would be induced to sell their land at the free-market price in Palestine, which was four to five times higher than the price of land in Transjordan. As for the tenant farmers, the costs of their resettlement would be paid through loans from the British government and the "Development Company." [55]

Ruppin added:

> I do not believe in the transfer of the individual. I believe in the transfer of entire villages. And I think that the Development Company should first build there [in Transjordan] several model settlements so that the Arabs here can see what they can get there....I believe that we would possibly be able, even if not instantaneously, to transfer in these 10–15 years 100,000 Arabs or 25,000 peasant families. [56]

Opposing this minimal transfer scheme of Ruppin, Shertok told the delegates about the "maximal calculation" made in the JA memo to be submitted to the Woodhead Commission: "We calculated in our memo that objectively there is a place in Transjordan for 60,000 Arab families"—virtually the entire Arab population in the Peel-proposed Jewish state. "Even in the territory they already cultivate today, it is possible to bring 20–25,000 families. On the eastern side of the Jordan valley a few thousand families could go. And in the still uncultivated land there is a place for an additional 25–30,000 families. Together we arrived at the figure of 60,000 families." This "realistic" plan, which could be implemented in 15 to 20 years, would constitute "a revolution in the entire life and economic structure" of Palestine. [57]

Mapai leader David Remez declared that the Yishuv should not pretend to be righteous by standers and expect radical land transformation and Arab removal to be carried out by the British. They would never do it, he said; it should and could be put into effect only by the Yishuv. "We must say these things despite the risk involved in it, and we must have the force to confiscate land in the Jewish state for development and the implementation of the settlement plan—which is the basis of the whole structure." [58] The powers to confiscate land were needed because the politically-influenced

Arabs will not sell their land. In conjunction with forced removal, he stated the need for "policies which would attract [people] from the village to the city—to transfer Arabs from the village to the city in order to release land for the Jews." [59]

The more influential Mapai leader, Berl Katzneslon, spelled out his conception of forcible wholesale transfer in the following terms:

> What is a compulsory transfer
>
> ...
>
> Compulsory transfer does not mean individual transfer. It means that once we resolved to transfer there should be a political body able to force this or that Arab who would not want to move out. But if you have to decide on transfer in each case with every Arab village and every Arab individual you will never finish with this matter. Regarding the transfer of Arab individuals we are always doing this. But the question will be the transfer of much greater quantity of Arabs through an agreement with the Arab state: this is called a compulsory transfer. But first of all there is a need for an agreement to which Britain and the Arab state will be partners.... We have here a war about principles, and in the same way that we must wage a war for maximum territory, there must also be here a war [for the transfer "principle"]. We are not interested in making the solution easy for the [Technical] Commission. We must not give up any chance.... We must insist on the principle that it must be a large agreed transfer. [60]

Katznelson's use of war metaphors when speaking of the need to promote transfer is telling. His idea of transfer as a solution to the strategic problems of the Jewish state's frontiers is outlined in the following speech:

> For me it is not a question of how many Arabs will go from a certain village to Tulkarm. This is a funny question: this could easily be arranged. But the question of who will live in the frontier regions is for me one of the biggest strategic and security questions of the Jewish state. If Arab villages will remain in the border regions then no guarding or army is useful.... And if the transfer is carried out, it is

> required first of all in order to clear the border regions so that Hebrew settlements will be set up there. There are delicate things that it is not easy to talk about....If there is a logic behind the transfer then this is even stronger in the frontier regions than any other place in the country. Need I explain the dangers if this will not be arranged? [61]

It was not only the frontier districts that Katznelson was concerned about, but the entire issue of a large Arab minority remaining *in situ* anywhere in the Jewish state. “There is the question of how the army, the police and the civil service will function and how a state can be run if part of its population is disloyal.” Katznelson added that he was willing to give the Arabs equal rights on condition that “only a small minority of Arabs will remain in the country.” As a solution to this problem, Katznelson proposed two interrelated “development plans.” The first involved compulsory confiscation of land from the Arab farmers accompanied by their eviction and transfer from one place to another within the projected Jewish state; this stage would include the forced evacuation of the frontier regions. The second aimed at Arab transfer from the Jewish state to neighboring Arab countries. [62]

Ben-Zvi agreed with Katznelson that the issues of Arab land confiscation and the removal of Arab peasants were intertwined. “I agree that the foundation is the evacuation of the land in order to create the possibility for settlement. The second question of diminishing the Arab population, is a function of the first question.” If after fifty years of Zionist colonization the Yishuv had purchased only five percent of the land, he said, “How long is it going to take until we attain 80 percent of the land?” He could imagine a hypothetical situation in which a hundred thousand Arabs would be transferred without releasing one square centimeter of land; transfer of itself would therefore not solve the fundamental problem of land. “Even if the Jewish state will be in the whole land of Israel, the difficulty will be even greater” if a policy of land expropriation were not implemented along with transfer.

He continued:

> It must be abundantly clear that there will be two chief objectives during the time of creating a Hebrew state: 1) promoting Jewish immigration and settlement; and 2) promoting Arab transfer and resettlement.... This must be included in the fundamental roles of establishing the state.... There must be a clear status that we have a role in transferring Arab farmers and fellahin linked with the question of buying land, let's say in Transjordan [and in agreement with the British and the Arab state]. [63]

In addition to "confiscatory agrarian legislation," Ben-Zvi suggested that the imposition of taxes would put additional pressure on Arab farmers. "It would be better to transfer a large number in 2–3 years," but this would not be easy in the case of property-owning Arabs and peasants. However, many Arabs would be cleared out in two or three years by controlling and supervising their citizenship acquisition. "By and large those will be Arabs without property and it is easy for them to leave the country or easy for us to remove them from the country. This is not a problem.... We must set up a committee that will study legislation regarding citizenship and prepare material to back up these things." [64]

Another advocate of a forced removal was Eliahu Berligne, the leader of the Zionist religious party Knesset Yisrael and a member of the Zionist Actions Committee and Va'ad Leumi, of which he was for many years treasurer. Berligne rejected partition, and declared that the Yishuv should insist on compulsory transfer despite the fact that it had been ruled out by Ormsby-Gore. "Also, those who are in favor among us agree on this point with the Peel Commission, that the transfer is necessary whether by coercion or not —on this we have to sit and discuss with the British government, but this item is necessary for the establishment of a Jewish state in whatever borders." Berligne also suggested that "taxes should be increased so that the Arabs will flee because of the taxes." [65]

Eliezer Kaplan wholeheartedly supported the idea of "an organized transfer from a large territory." And although he believed that under certain circumstances—i.e., in agreement with the Arab state and with the help of financial inducements—it would be possible to engineer "voluntary"

evacuation, he said that by and large he endorsed Ben-Gurion's approach of placing greater emphasis on forced removal.

Ben-Gurion himself summed up the general mood of the discussions with regard to forced Arab removal:

> With compulsory transfer we [would] have vast areas....I support compulsory transfer. I do not see anything immoral in it. But compulsory transfer could only be carried out by England....Had its implementation been dependent merely on our proposal I would have proposed it; but this would be dangerous to propose when the British government has disassociated itself from a compulsory transfer.... But this question should not be removed from the agenda because it is a central question. There are two issues here: 1) sovereignty and 2) the removal of a certain number of Arabs, and we must insist on both of them. [66]

Ben-Gurion went on to explain that while the "principle" of forcible removal should be adhered to, it would be more tactful in public discourse to replace the formula of "compulsory" transfer by other measures which had been discussed earlier when Weizmann was present. Among these were "citizenship [control] and a state agricultural development policy" [i.e., land confiscation], with the double aim of "evacuating places for settlement by the removal of Arabs from the country" and creating intensive land cultivation—this last a summation of the general view of land expropriation as a major mechanism for precipitating an Arab exodus and promoting Yishuv development policies. "It is clear that the best way is the transfer of the Arabs to [al-] Jazirah [in Syria and Iraq]. But those remaining Arabs who might not be transferred should not be left in the existing situation" with substantial landholding. [67]

The debates of the Jewish Agency Executive that June in a sense marked the culmination of a process that had been unleashed by the Royal (Peel) Commission's investigation and report and more particularly by its elevation of the transfer solution to real possibility and a respectable option, having now received the imprimatur of an official British body. This process involved unprecedented discussion of the transfer solution and its

approval in principle by a majority in the most important Zionist policy-making bodies. It began with the JAE meetings of October-November 1936 in anticipation of the Peel Commission's arrival in Palestine, continued with the World Convention of Ihud Po'alei Tzion and the Twentieth World Zionist Congress in Zurich in August 1937, and ended with the initial formulation of concrete plans and proposals within the JA Political Department's Transfer Committee.

But while the June discussions showed a further consolidation of the consensus concerning the moral, political, and utilitarian justification of transfer, their significance was limited to the evolution of the Zionist body's own internal plans and ideas on the subject. As far as British policy was concerned, the transfer issue, at least for the time being, was virtually dead.

In August 1938, two months after the JAE meetings, the Woodhead Commission left Palestine to return to England. Its findings were issued in October. The Commission concluded that the Peel Commission plan was unworkable, specifically because of the large number of Arabs inhabiting the territories assigned to the Jewish state: devising boundaries for a Jewish state without a large Arab population was impossible, the Commission pointed out in its report, without whittling down the Jewish area to a size that no Zionist could accept. More importantly for the issue at hand, the commission concluded after investigation into the situation on the ground that the prospects for "voluntary" Arab transfer, were, if they existed at all, extremely slight. [68]

The demise of the Peel Commission plan came as no big surprise. As already mentioned, there were signs before the Woodhead Commission had even set out that partition was in doubt given the virulent opposition by all Arab groups, the opposition or at best ambivalence of the Zionists, and the reservations expressed by British government officials concerning compulsory transfer, the most explosive point of the plan but a *sine qua non* for its workability. In retrospect, it would seem that the dispatch of the technical commission may have been intended both as a stalling tactic and a face-saving device prior to the complete abandonment of the Peel Commission recommendations. [69]

The Zionists were aware of this even as they passionately debated the pros and cons of partition and transfer at the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of June 1938. But although transfer had been discussed within the context of partition ever since the Peel Commission's proposals, it was a separate and distinct issue—as evidenced by the fact that numerous delegates to the various decision-making bodies favored transfer while opposing partition. In this context, Ben-Gurion's reference at the 12 June meeting to Eliahu Berligne's comment that transfer is "necessary for the establishment of a Jewish state in whatever borders" takes on added significance:

> There are things [such as the transfer] that could apply to the whole Land of Israel. Even if the [Jewish] state will include the whole historic Land of Israel, also then there will be the problem of an Arab minority. And this [transfer] is not necessarily involved in a partition. [70]

Thus was inaugurated a new phase in the discussion of transfer—transfer within the context of all Palestine.

Notes

1. See Sharett, Yoman Medini, Vol. 2, pp. 431, 435–36.

2. Between 1929 and 1930 Epstein worked in construction in Transjordan. In 1930 he was awarded a fellowship at the American University in Beirut and travelled in the desert for eight months with Bedouin tribes, as a result of which he published two books (in Hebrew): The Bedouins: Their Life and Customs (1933) and The Population of Transjordan (1934). During the same period he was engaged in intelligence-gathering activities on behalf of the Jewish Agency Political Department, becoming one of its leading "Arabists."

3. Weitz Diary, A 246/3, entry for 11 November 1937, p. 376, CZA.

4. Ibid.; Simons, International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895–1947, pp. 163–64.

5. Weitz Diary, A 246/3, entry for 21 November 1937, p. 31, CZA.

6. Protocols of the Committee for Population Transfer, 21 November 1937, S25/247, CZA.

7. Ibid.

8. Weitz defined tenant farmers as those who cultivated land that belonged to landlords who did not live in the same villages and who owned between 50 to 100 percent of those lands.

9. Detailed figures for the proposed transferees from various districts were assessed and determined by Weitz on the basis of the 1931 population census:

From the Safad district	20,900
From the Tiberias district	6,100
From the Nazareth district	7,000
From the Haifa district	14,800
From the Beisan district	3,400
From the Tulkarm district	3,900
From the Acre district	17,400
From the Jaffa district	5,700
From the Ramle district	4,200
From the Gaza district	3,900
Total	87,300

Of these, Weitz calculated 35,000 were tenant farmers who came from 5 northern districts: Safad—15,000; Acre—11,000; Haifa—5,700; Nazareth—1,700; Tiberias—1,700">Of these, Weitz calculated 35,000 were tenant farmers who came from 5 northern districts: Safad—15,000; Acre—11,000; Haifa—5,700; Nazareth—1,700; Tiberias—1,700.

10. Weitz Diary, p. 381, CZA. Weitz estimated that P£8,276,000 would be needed to implement his plan.

11. The proposed evacuated land after this Arab transfer:

525,000	dunums cultivated by tenant farmers
125,000	dunums from small land-holding peasants
30,000	dunums from Beisan
680,000	

12. Weitz Diary, p. 382, CZA.

13. Protocols of the Committee for Population Transfer.

14. Weitz Diary, p. 381, CZA.

15. Protocols of the Committee for Population Transfer.

16. Ibid. Bonné's implicit support for "compulsory" evacuation had already been stated in his memorandum of July 1937, entitled "Outline for an Enquiry into the Problems of Exchange of Land and Population," CZA, S25/10059.

17. Protocols of the Committee for Population Transfer.

18. Weitz Diary, p. 381, CZA.

19. Eric Mills' work on the Census of Palestine etc. Population of Villages, Towns and Administrative Areas, Vols. I–II, (Official Publication CB.B.113), 1933.

20. Protocol of the Committee for Population Transfer.

21. CZA, S25/247.

22. Weitz Diary, A 246/4, p. 486, CZA.

23. Protocols of the Committee for Population Transfer, CZA.

24. Protocols of the Sub-Committee on Transfer of Arabs, 5 December 1937, CZA.

25. Weitz Diary, A 246/3, entry for 5 December 1937, p. 394, CZA. At the meeting of the Transfer Committee on 23 March 1938, Eliahu Epstein

presented a memo on the al-Jazirah area, which he had travelled to on behalf of the committee. Eliahu Elat (Epstein), Shivat Tzion Ve'arav [The Return to Zion and the Arabs] (Tel Aviv: 1974), pp. 160–175. See also Ben-Gurion, Zichronot [Memoirs], Vol. 4, pp. 471–72; Protocol of the Committee for Population Transfer, 23 March 1938.

26. CZA, a letter from F. Simon to Dr. A Granovsky dated 23 February 1938, S25/247.

27. Ibid.

28. A memorandum of the Station for Agricultural Research, Rehovot, to the Jewish Agency Executive, no. 1230/7/2328, S25/247, CZA.

29. Cmd. 5364, January 1938.

30. Protocol of the Committee for Population Transfer, meeting held on 27 May 1938, S25/247, CZA.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Cited in M. Finbron, ed., Devar Anshe Shem 'Al Tochnit Hahalukah [The Sayings of Famous Men on the Partition Plan] (Tel Aviv: 1938), pp. 18–19.

36. "Transfer of the Arab Population," S25/247, CZA.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Sharett, Yoman Medini, Vol. 2, pp. 435–36.

42. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of 7 June 1938, in Jerusalem, confidential, Vol. 28, no. 51, CZA.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of 9 June 1938, Vol. 28, no. 52, CZA.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of 12 June 1938, Vol. 28, no. 53, CZA.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. The Germans constituted 25 percent of the population in Czechoslovakia; in Sudatenland their proportion was much higher.

52. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of 12 June 1938, Vol. 28, no. 53, CZA.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Middle East Center, St. Antony's College, Oxford, Box 1, file 9, and Appendix to the Palestine Report—Historical Background, DS. 126.4.

69. On the British Cabinet debates See Cab 23/9a, 22 December 1937; see also exchanges of notes between the Colonial Office and Foreign Office, FO 371/20822 and FO 371/21862, E1592. The British step-by-step retreat from the Peel Commission's recommendations culminated in the White Paper of 1939, which prohibited transfer of Arab lands to the Yishuv in most localities of Palestine and restricted Jewish immigration to 15,000 a year for five years.

70. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of 12 June 1938, no. 53, CZA.

CHAPTER FOUR

The War Years to 1948

With the final demise of the Peel partition plan, the transfer debate lost much of its urgency: transfer had little chance of implementation outside the context of statehood or the immediate prospect of statehood, and statehood had now been postponed. Moreover, the issuance on 17 May of the 1939 White Paper presented the Zionist leadership with a more immediate challenge.

The 1939 White Paper represents Britain's retreat from its position of total support for the Jewish national home. Considering that its obligations in that regard had already been met, the government now felt it should turn its attention to some of the Arab grievances. Among other things, it called for conditional independence for a unitary Palestinian state after ten years as well as restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases. The outbreak of World War II that September further assured that the leadership's main energies would be otherwise occupied.

It was thus that for the next few years (indeed, for the duration of the war), the Zionists shifted their priorities. To push publicly for transfer at that point could interfere with the more immediate tasks of lobbying for the lifting of immigration quotas and land purchase restrictions, and could complicate relations with Britain, anxious not to antagonize the Arabs during the war effort. As a result, the Zionist leaders dealt cautiously with the transfer issue. Furthermore, they were becoming concerned about Britain's growing reticence with regard to Zionist aims in Palestine, and accelerated their search for alternative sponsors. Increasingly, they turned their attention to the United States.

Preoccupation with the war effort and combatting the 1939 White Paper in no way signalled a loss of interest in transfer; indeed, transfer remained a prerequisite in the leaders' minds for statehood, which they knew had been postponed at least until the end of the war. Within months of the Woodhead

Commission report and Britain's formal abandonment of the Peel Commission's recommendations, Ben-Gurion raised the transfer issue in his memorandum to the Zionist Actions Committee meeting of 17 December 1938. The committee meeting, which Ben-Gurion was unable to attend because of urgent business in London, had been organized against the background of Britain's call for a general conference on Palestine—what was to become the St. James Conference of February and March 1939—to be attended by Arab, Palestinian, and Zionist representatives. In his memorandum, Ben-Gurion proposed that the Zionist leadership in the United States be included-already a reflection of the shifting focus to a new power center—and that a Zionist delegation be sent to the London Conference with "one single program." Underpinning the unified program to be presented was the traditional Zionist line, which he reiterated in his memo, that since the Arabs had already been given Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia—which he pronounced to be "more than enough"—the Zionists would demand all of Palestine. As to the fate of the Palestinian Arabs, Ben-Gurion went on:

> We will propose to Iraq P£10 million in return for the resettlement of 100 thousand Arab families from Palestine in Iraq. I do not know whether Iraq will accept this proposal. If this business was only with Iraq—she might listen to us. Iraq needs a larger Arab settlement and of course it would not be adverse to receiving millions [of pounds]. But Ibn Saud and Egypt will also be in London." [1]

Weizmann, too, had been undaunted by the setback with regard to the partition plan and its concomitant, transfer. At a meeting with British Labor party leader Clement Attlee on 17 October 1939, scarcely a month after World War II broke out, Weizmann noted that new European frontiers would be drawn at the war's end, forcing millions of people to move to other habitations; the Palestinians, too, he predicted, would be subjected to the same process of uprooting and dislocation. [2] In the course of the meeting, which also was attended by Moshe Shertok and Berl Locker (a political adviser to the Zionist Executive in London with close ties to the British Labor party), [3] Weizmann stated that during his forthcoming visit to the United States he intended to discuss with President Roosevelt a plan for a Jewish state in Palestine, with wider frontiers than those mentioned in the

Peel partition proposal. He added that the Palestinian Arabs would be evacuated from the proposed state to make room for three to four million Jewish immigrants. Here, as in the past, the idea was that in order for such proposals to make an impact on the rulers of the neighboring Arab states, they should appear to be coming from influential Western politicians; [4] the pro-Zionist sympathies of Roosevelt, Churchill, and the British Labor party, now part of the war cabinet, gave cause for hope, and indeed Churchill was to express support for transfer in 1941. [5]

Weizmann continued to advocate an Arab transfer, and in May 1941 he told a conference of American Jewish delegates about the Zionist search for large tracts of land in Transjordan and Iraq that could be used to resettle the Palestinians, who would then be approached and told: "We shall see that you are colonised [*sic*] and that you get five dunams of land for every dunam we get." [6] When later asked, in confidence, by the British colonial secretary, Lord Moyne, whether such an evacuation could be carried out without force and bloodshed, Weizmann replied: "It could be done if Britain and America talked frankly to the Arabs." [7] Some months later, at a gathering of British Zionist and Jewish representatives held at New Court in London on 9 September 1941, Weizmann again put the burden of responsibility for transfer on the British: "If, for instance, they [the British] would be able to transfer the Arab tenant farmers...it would be possible to settle in their place half a million Jews." [8]

Ben-Gurion returned to the theme of transfer in his "Lines for Zionist Policy" dated 15 October 1941. [9] chapter 3, which focused on "the Arab Question," reiterated the theme that "the Land of Israel is only a small part of the territories inhabited by Arabs and the Arabs of the Land of Israel are only a negligible group among the Arabic-speaking peoples," and that it was not too much to ask the Palestinians to cede that "small part." He then went on to note that both Syria and Iraq were "sparsely populated," and that "if only they would be prepared to absorb the Arab population of the Land of Israel, in part or wholly, this would be an assistance to them rather than an obstacle." More specifically with regard to the actual implementation of the transfer operation itself, he went on:

> We have to examine, first, if this transfer is practical, and secondly, if it is necessary. It is impossible to imagine general evacuation without compulsion, and brutal compulsion. There are of course sections of the non-Jewish population of the Land of Israel which will not resist transfer under adequate conditions to certain neighbouring countries, such as the Druzes, a number of Bedouin tribes in the Jordan Valley and the south, the Circassians and perhaps even the Metwalis [the Shi'ite of the Galilee]. But it would be very difficult to bring about the resettlement of other sections of the Arab populations such as the *fellahin* and also urban populations in neighbouring Arab countries by transferring them voluntarily, whatever economic inducements are offered to them. [10]

Like Weizmann, Ben-Gurion believed that the war in Europe could facilitate transfer:

> The possibility of a large-scale transfer of a population by force was demonstrated, when the Greeks and the Turks were transferred [after World War I]. In the present war the idea of transferring a population is gaining more sympathy as a practical and the most secure means of solving the dangerous and painful problem of national minorities. The war has already brought the resettlement of many people in eastern and southern Europe, and in the plans for postwar settlements the idea of a large-scale population transfer in central, eastern, and southern Europe increasingly occupies a respectable place. [11]

But, he cautioned, the population exchange between Turkey and Greece—or the "transfer," as he insisted on calling it—was not entirely analagous. The Greco-Turkish transfer was the result of Turkey's crushing military victory over the Greeks; [12] since the Arabs were theoretically "friends" of the Allies, and of Great Britain in particular, rather than a fighting party "it would be difficult to expect victorious Britain [to take] the responsibility of forcibly transferring the Arabs of the Land of Israel merely for the benefit of the Jewish people."

In light of this, Ben-Gurion advised caution in pronouncements on the transfer issue; in his view, it would be politically and tactically imprudent

for the Zionists to advocate and campaign publicly for the forcible removal of the Palestinian Arabs in anticipation of a post-World War II settlement. Instead, he suggested a Zionist-inspired campaign in England and America that would aim at “influencing” neighboring countries, especially Syria and Iraq, “to collaborate” with the Yishuv in implementing “voluntary” transfer schemes in return for economic gains. [13]

He was even more discreet in his article “Test of Fulfillment,” published in the *Jewish Frontier* the following year, in which he merely observed that Syria and Iraq “may also have an interest, economically as well as politically, in strengthening their position vis-à-vis their Turkish and Persian neighbors by transferring new Arab settlers to the country, and the only source of such settlers is Palestine.” [14]

Weizmann may have discussed the idea of Jewish statehood and transfer when he met with Roosevelt in 1939, as he told Attlee he intended to do. The Zionists also apparently later sought American financial aid for the implementation of their plan to transfer Palestinians to Arab countries. [15] In a departure from the discretion that generally surrounded public mention of transfer during that period, Weizmann wrote an article in the prestigious American quarterly *Foreign Affairs* in January 1942 calling on the Western powers to support the creation of a Jewish “commonwealth” in Palestine—a foreshadowing of the formulation used in the Biltmore program in May of that year, which marked the first official mainstream Zionist demand for a state in all of Palestine. In the same article, he also asked the West to pressure the Arabs to accept a population transfer. [16] A statehood plus transfer plan was likewise communicated to Roosevelt’s personal envoy, General Patrick Hurley, during the latter’s visit to Palestine in 1943. Upon his return, Hurley reported that the Yishuv leadership was determined to establish a Jewish state that would include the whole of Palestine and Transjordan, and that it was intent on forcing the “eventual transfer of the Arab population to Iraq.” [17]

Despite these overtures, however, the top Zionist leaders kept a relatively low profile on the subject of transfer during the war years. Transfer clearly remained part of—indeed, central to—their long-term strategy, and whenever a proposal came up they invariably showed extreme interest. But

given more pressing concerns, they were content at this stage by and large to leave the formulation of specific transfer plans to lesser figures in the movement.

Yosef Weitz, the Second Transfer Committee, and the al-Jazirah Scheme

Few individuals were as dedicated to implementing the concept of transfer as Yosef Weitz, member of the Jewish Agency's first Transfer Committee during the Peel partition deliberations and the author of one of the transfer proposals drawn up at the time. Since the abandonment of the Peel plan and the removal of transfer as a top item on the agenda of the main leadership, Weitz had become increasingly focused on the issue, seeing it as the only means through which the future of the Jewish state could be assured. However, like the rest of the Yishuv leadership, he believed that the solution would have to await the end of the war, when a radically changed situation would make Arab evacuation feasible. In the meantime, he was determined to facilitate its implementation. One of the best sources of insight into the Yishuv leadership's transfer ideas during World War II is found in the unedited manuscript of the Weitz diary, which is located in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. [18]

Weitz, it will be recalled, occupied the key position of director of the Land Department of the Jewish National Fund, the organization in charge of land acquisition and distribution among settlements, and hence one of the most important bodies of the Yishuv. Like other top Jewish National Fund leaders and executives engaged in practical colonization and the perennial search for Arab land to purchase, Weitz was convinced that transfer would provide a radical solution to the dual problems of land and Arab demography. His diary indicates that the idea of an Arab evacuation dominated his mind and activities for many years before and during the 1948 war.

A good summary of Weitz's political beliefs is provided by a diary entry dated 20 December 1940, in which he recounts a conversation with JNF colleague Zalman Lifschitz in the latter's Jerusalem office. When the

question of preparing material about all the Arab villages in Palestine and their landholdings came up, Weitz told Lifschitz:

> Amongst ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples in this country. No “development” will bring us closer to our aim to be an independent people in this small country. After the Arabs are transferred, the country will be wide open for us; with the Arabs staying the country will remain narrow and restricted. When the war is over, and the English have emerged victorious and when the judging nations sit on the throne of law, our people should bring their petitions and claims before them; and the only solution is the Land of Israel, or at least the Western Land of Israel [i.e., Palestine], without Arabs. There is no room for compromise on this point. The Zionist work so far, in terms of preparation and paving the way for the creation of the Hebrew state in the Land of Israel, has been good and was able to satisfy itself with land-purchasing but this will not bring about the state; that must come about simultaneously in the manner of redemption (here is the meaning of the Messianic idea). The only way is to transfer the Arabs from here to neighbouring countries, all of them, except perhaps Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Old Jerusalem. Not a single village or a single tribe must be left. And the transfer must be done through their absorption in Iraq and Syria and even in Transjordan. For that goal, money will be found—even a lot of money. And only then will the country be able to absorb millions of Jews and a solution will be found to the Jewish question. There is no other solution. [19]

As director of the JNF’s Land Department, Weitz was at the center of the Yishuv’s land-purchasing activities. His work took him all over Palestine, and it was in the course of these travels, which constantly confronted him with the denseness of Arab settlement, that he became almost obsessed with transfer as the only solution to the Yishuv’s future. In his entry of 18 March 1941, for example, Weitz noted his visit to settlements in the Esdraelon and Jordan valleys, accompanied by JNF official Moshe Goldenberg (who later, as a local Haganah commander, played a role in evacuating Arab villages of the district in 1948). He recorded:

> Once again I come face to face with the land-settlement difficulties that emanate from the existence of two "peoples" in close proximity.... We have clashing interests with the Arabs everywhere, and these interests will go and clash increasingly...and once again the answer from inside me is heard: only [Arab] population transfer and evacuating this country so it would become exclusively for us is the solution. This idea does not leave me in these days and I find comfort in it in the face of the enormous difficulties in the way of land-buying and settlement. [20]

Two days later, after touring other settlements in the Esdraelon Valley, including Mishmar Ha'emek, Weitz wrote in his diary:

> I am increasingly consumed by despair. The Zionist idea is the answer to the Jewish question in the Land of Israel; only in the Land of Israel, but not that the Arabs should remain a majority. The complete evacuation of the country from its other inhabitants and handing it over to the Jewish people is the answer. [21]

Another countryside tour in the summer of 1941 took Weitz to the hilly region in central Palestine, including northwestern Ramallah. There, he recorded seeing

> large [Arab] villages crowded in population and surrounded by cultivated land growing olives, grapes, figs, sesame, and maize fields.... Would we be able to maintain scattered settlements among these existing [Arab] villages that will always be larger than ours? And is there any possibility of buying their [land]? ....and once again I hear that voice inside me called: *evacuate this country.* " [22] [emphasis in original]

Weitz's intimate knowledge of and involvement in land purchase made him eminently aware of its limitations. As late as 1947, after almost half a century of tireless and relentless efforts, the collective ownership fo the Jewish National Fund-which constituted over one-half of the Yishuv total-amounted to a mere 3.5 percent of the land area of Palestine. [23] Weitz was in a better position than most to know that "without taking action to transfer

[Arab] population we will not be able to solve our question by [land] buying." [24]

Weitz did not merely despair of the situation but turned his attention to practical solutions. In his diary entry of 4 May, he recounts a conversation he had with someone he identifies simply as "Horowitz" (perhaps David Horowitz, director of the Economic Department of the Jewish Agency) and his colleague Yosef Nahmani, the JNF's land purchasing agent in the Galilee and likewise a member of the first Transfer Committee: "What should be done when we stand face to face with our neighbours and later our open enemies?...Nahmani supports my position that the solution will not come if we remain partners [in this country] with our good neighbours in the future. The country must be unitary and solely for one people." [25] That same month, Weitz was working on a plan for the evacuation of Arab property and real estate in the country in preparation for "the arrival of the hour of population transfer." [26]

The crystalization of his preoccupation with Arab removal into a plan of action is illustrated in the following passage, written on 26 June 1941 after a visit to the "lands of Qubab," an Arab village to the east of Jaffa:

> Throughout the journey my reflections were focused on that plan, about which I have been thinking for years; the plan...of evacuating the country for us. I know the difficulties...but only through population transfer will redemption come.... There is no room for us with our neighbours...development is a very slow process ... They [the Arabs] are too many and too much rooted [in the country]...the only way is to cut and eradicate them from the roots. I feel that this is the truth....I am beginning to understand the essence of the "miracle" which should happen with the arrival of the Messiah; a "miracle" does not happen in evolution, but all of a sudden, in one moment....I can see the enormous difficulties but this should not deflect us from our aim; on the contrary, we must double our efforts to overcome the difficulties and find a listening ear, first in America, then in Britain and then in the neighbouring countries. There the money will make it. People and money will be transferred there. We will set up an apparatus from the Yishuv manned by distinguished experts and these will supervise the

> Arab transfer and resettlement and a second apparatus will receive the [Jewish] “redeemers” and plant them on the land....I pondered these measures all the way from Tel Aviv and also while visiting the lands near Ramat Hasharon and K’far Azar. This is the aim, the redemption, and the dream. [27]

Weitz’s energies were soon directed to setting up the “apparatus” that would receive the “redeemers” who in turn could bring about the sudden miracle. On 22 June he visited Menahem Ussishkin, the powerful chairman of the Jewish National Fund since 1923. After noting that they were in complete agreement concerning their assessment of the situation, Weitz wrote:

> The Land of Israel is not small at all, if only the Arabs will be removed, and if its frontiers would be enlarged a little; to the north all the way to the Litani [River in Lebanon], and to the east by including the Golan Heights...while the Arabs should be transferred to northern Syria and Iraq. [28]

In the same entry, he opined that all Yishuv activities must be directed towards this objective: “From now on we must work out a secret plan based on the removal of the Arabs from here” and “to inculcate it into American political circles...today we have no other alternative...we will not live here with the Arabs.” [29]

Some days later he discussed his thoughts on the matter with JNF colleague Zalman Lifschitz, a member of the first Transfer Committee who had helped collect material concerning a possible transfer of Palestinians to Transjordan and Syria. Weitz recorded in his diary that Lifschitz “agreed with this position on transferring the Arabs of the Land of Israel and on the need to make preparations and work out solutions.” They also agreed to investigate the possibilities of settling transferees in neighboring countries, for which map preparation and material collection were needed, and “to approach the Political Department [of the Jewish Agency] so it could take action in this direction, and work out detailed plans for transferring the Arabs of the Land of Israel to neighbouring countries.” [30]

Meanwhile, on 10 July 1941, Weitz met with Moshe Shertok, head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, and Eliezer Kaplan, head of the JA's Finance and Administration department, both of whom had been on the first Transfer Committee. He explained that a plan for Arab evacuation was essential for "our redemption" and proposed that the Jewish Agency appoint a committee composed of 3 to 5 members to investigate ways of implementing evacuation to Syria, Iraq, and Transjordan. "The Committee must work quietly and without publicity but it could not work in complete mystery and without assistance from public authorities, especially now, during the war. Therefore, contact ought to be made with the [British military] authorities in Egypt." Shertok, who was on his way to visit Egypt at the time, agreed, but thought that it would be impossible to involve the British authorities "in this committee and plan with us." Shertok promised to lend support to the preparatory research into, and the fulfilment of, the plan. Kaplan, too, said that "he wanted to be a partner" in these preparations. [31] Weitz proposed himself, Lifschitz, and Nahmani as members of the second Transfer Committee. [32]

Toward the end of the following month, Weitz spoke to the powerful Mapai leader Berl Katznelson about his planning activities and noted that Katznelson "not only has espoused the idea for years but, like me, sees in it the only solution for our problem in the country. He believes that the political context that will be created at the end of the war will bring about recognition and acceptance of this solution." Katznelson "was pleased to hear about my proposal of preparing the infrastructure" and promised to speak to Shertok and Kaplan. [33]

One might note here in passing that Katznelson, a leading figure of the Labor movement and often described in Israeli literature as the conscience of the Yishuv and the hero of socialist Zionism, remained until his death in 1944 a firm advocate of transfer, which he believed could be implemented in the immediate postwar period. [34] At a meeting with youth at the Mikve' Yisrael agricultural school in July 1944, he noted that the Jewish state had always meant the imposition of Zionist will on the Palestinian Arab majority and that all Zionist actions had been carried out against the wishes of the Arabs. Nor were the Zionists unique in this regard, according to Katznelson: Stalin had transferred one million Germans from the Volga

region to distant places in Siberia and in 1928 declared Birobidjan an autonomous Jewish national district against the wishes of the indigenous population. [35] Like Ben-Gurion, Katznelson believed that wholesale evacuation of the Palestinian population was merely the continuation of a natural process that had begun when Zionist settlers displaced Arab farmers and residents. In a speech at Ashdot Ya'acov Kibbutz in the Jordan Valley the same month, he reminded his listeners that the establishment of Kibbutz Merhavyah in the Esdraelon Valley had led to a small-scale Arab transfer. [36]

At all events, after Shertok returned from Egypt in August, he and Kaplan gave Weitz the signal to proceed to Syria to look into the feasibility of al-Jazirah, the region in the northeastern Syrian desert steppe straddling the border with Iraq, as a destination for the Arab evacuees. The al-Jazirah idea was not new. It had already figured in the deliberations of the first Transfer Committee in 1938, and one of the committee members, Eliahu Epstein, head of the Near East and Middle East Division of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, had travelled to al-Jazirah at the bidding of the group to look into resettlement possibilities and reported back to the committee in March 1938. Moreover, Ben-Gurion himself had mentioned al-Jazirah at the Jewish Agency Executive meeting in June 1938 as an ideal destination for the transferees. [37] Exemplifying the new circumspection characteristic of the leadership with regard to transfer during this period, Kaplan asked Weitz to conduct his investigation "very cautiously." [38]

On 1 September 1941, Weitz was granted a French visa to visit Syria and Lebanon. Before leaving, he visited Mishmar Ha'emek Kibbutz, the headquarters of the Hashomer Hatza'ir movement, a socialist movement theoretically in favor of binationalism and one of the only groups to take a stand against transfer at the Twentieth Zionist Congress in 1937. Weitz addressed the Kibbutz youth on "the details of the population transfer plan" in the presence of Ya'acov Hazan, the co-leader of the movement. Hazan stated afterwards that he opposed the plan because of its "impracticality" and because it would turn the Arabs against the Yishuv and therefore cause political damage. Other Kibbutz members, however, although expressing the same skepticism concerning the plan's feasibility, said that they would support it. [39] Weitz also went to Haifa to meet with Eliahu Epstein and to be briefed on Epstein's own journey to al-Jazirah three years earlier. According

to Weitz's diary entry, Epstein believed that the "plan for population transfer is the only plan for solving our problem." [40]

Weitz reached Damascus on the eve of 10 September and immediately began looking for books and updated information on the region and population of al-Jazirah. He found a current map and got help gathering statistical data from an Arab named Ibrahim Dorah, an informer employed by Nahmani. [41] A week later, after visiting al-Jazirah and returning via Lebanon, he recorded in his diary:

> Undoubtedly al-Jazirah is destined to become a huge absorption home for people—workers, peasants, townspeople, and others. There is much good land and plenty of water ready to be exploited. If the governments want to solve the Jewish question, then a solution could be achieved by the transfer of part of the Arab population of the Land of Israel to the Syrian Jazirah and no doubt also to the Iraqi Jazirah. There is no doubt that a thorough investigation will show that al-Jazirah, in its natural boundaries between the Euphrates and the Tigris, could absorb one million peasants and the same number of townspeople. Is it impossible to set up another town like Damascus in the al-Jazirah desert? [42]

Weitz added that because of fatigue and a lack of time, he had been unable to explore the Latakia and Druze mountain regions in Syria as potential destinations for proposed transferees. [43] However, on his way back he read the book *En Syrie avec les Bedouins* (Paris, 1931) by the French author Victor Muller, and was intrigued by Muller's preaching of independence, or at least full autonomy, for the Bedouins, much to the chagrin of the Syrian government. "There is here an opening for inculcating the idea of settling al-Jazirah by Arab peasants," Weitz noted. [44]

After his return to Jerusalem, Weitz met Kaplan on 4 October to brief him on his mission and findings. He then proposed the establishment of a "reduced council," with the participation of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, to decide on strategies for implementing the evacuation scheme. Kaplan reacted positively, but once again pointed out that "the possibility of implementing the population transfer plan" must be

approached with “extreme caution.” Weitz proposed that they meet with Shertok, Katznelson, Bernard Joseph, Epstein, Lifschitz, Bonné, and Granovsky, all of whom (with the exception of Katznelson) were members of the first Transfer Committee. Weitz would discuss his mission to al-Jazirah, and then the general lines for action would be decided. Kaplan suggested that Bernard Joseph, legal adviser to the Political Department of the Jewish Agency and an early advocate of compulsory transfer, should take charge of preparing material that would help implement the scheme in the postwar period. [45]

As a follow-up to Weitz’s Syrian transfer idea, Bernard Joseph set off on a secret mission to Syria later that month. (Eliahu Sasson, the Damascus-born head of the Arab section of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department, had gone to Syria on another secret mission in September, possibly connected with the overall plan.) [46] Weitz briefed Joseph on 21 October, the eve of his departure, and asked him to find out whether the Yishuv’s technical experts working for Solel Bone, the Histadrut’s building and contracting organization employed in Syria at the time by the British army expeditionary force, “could carry out our mission in the al-Jazirah plan.” Joseph, who had been officially assigned by the Political Department to compile material for that purpose, promised that after returning from his mission “he would immediately start the arrangement for the preparatory research committee in a serious, thorough and consistent fashion.” [47]

A month later, a preparatory meeting was held at Joseph’s house in Jerusalem, attended by Kaplan, Weitz, Lifschitz, Eshbal, and Joseph. Eshbal was given the task of studying the climate of al-Jazirah. The group, not wishing to confine its options to Syria, asked Joseph to proceed to Transjordan with a hydrologist and an agricultural expert to look into the possibilities of exploiting ground water there. [48]

The group’s transfer preparations continued throughout 1942. On 31 May, Weitz noted in his diary that he met with Granovsky and discussed “the plan for population transfer.” Granovsky, who had succeeded Ussishkin as chairman of the Jewish National Fund upon the latter’s death the previous year, told Weitz that a committee composed of himself, Kaplan, Shertok, and Joseph had been set up “to work out a plan for preparations and

[transfer] activities." Granovsky expressed "complete sympathy for the population transfer plan," but warned Weitz that the scheme "should be carried out very cautiously." Weitz agreed to prepare an outline of the "investigation work in the direction of population transfer." [49]

On the following day Weitz and Kaplan met to discuss questions relating to the development of Jewish settlements in the Hula region. Weitz maintained that "we have to prepare a detailed fundamental plan that will wait until the end of the [world] war and until we evacuate the region of its [Arab] residents of today. The complete rejuvenation of the Hula will come only when the region will be homogenized in its ownership and cultivators." [50]

Weitz continued to push his idea whenever possible. In his diary he noted a trip to Nahlal on 10 September 1942 with Kaplan and David Stern (who had been associated with the first Transfer Committee). Accompanying them on the voyage were two prominent leaders of the Yishuv, Yosef Sprintzak and Shlomo Kaplansky, a left-wing Zionist leader of Mapai, who had been for many years head of Haifa Technion, and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive (1929–31). Weitz recorded that both were "contemplating" the question of transfer. [51] Later that same month, on 29 September, Weitz spoke to Professor Fritz Bodenheimer, a zoologist at Hebrew University who was about to leave for Iraq at the invitation of the Iraqi government, and asked him to use the opportunity to investigate (secretly) the possibility of a "population transfer." [52]

A concrete step in preparation for an eventual transfer was apparently taken in 1943, when Yehoshua' Hankin, a senior land-purchasing agent for the Jewish National Fund and the Palestine Land Development Company, concluded a deal with Mithqal al-Fayez, a tribal chief in Transjordan, for the purchase tens of thousands of dunums of land in the Ghor al-Kabid of Transjordan by the Jewish Agency. According to Yosef Weitz, al-Fayez received an advance payment of P£650 in July 1943 for the land, which was to be registered in the names of Moshe Shertok and Yosef Stromza (a lawyer), and which would be allocated to the would-be Palestinian transferees. A delegation composed of Yosef Weitz, Zalman Lifschitz, the lawyer A. Ben-Shemesh, and a certain professor Fikard visited the Ghor al-

Kabid land between 26 and 30 April 1944. [53] No other details of this reported transaction are known.

The extent of Weitz's activities in the direction of preparing the ground for the Jewish Agency transfer scheme to al-Jazirah and other destinations during World War II can hardly be exaggerated. The fruits of his efforts, however, were not to be fully manifested until the Palestine war of 1948.

Edward Norman's Plan of Transfer to Iraq, 1934–48

Edward A. Norman (1900–1955) was a New York-based Jewish millionaire who devoted much of his fortune and his political activity to supporting the Yishuv. In 1939, he established the American Fund for Palestine Institutions (later to become the American-Israel Cultural Fund), as "the first agency for joint and unified fund-raising on behalf of the cultural institutions" of the Yishuv and later Israel. He served as a governor of the Hebrew University and, between 1939 and 1943, as the president of the American Economic Committee for Palestine, a Zionist association established in 1932 with the primary objective of encouraging and guiding private enterprise in the Yishuv. Through its New York and Tel Aviv offices, his association furnished information about specific aspects of the Yishuv economy to thousands of Jewish immigrants in Palestine, and was regarded as a central source of economic information by leading Yishuv institutions, including the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut, and the Farmer's Federation. (Later, in 1952, the Committee office in New York became affiliated with the Jewish Agency for Israel.)

Norman was preoccupied with the idea of transfer and left considerable documentation concerning the vigorous efforts he made between 1934 and 1948, with the collaboration of the most important Yishuv and Zionist leaders, to bring about its implementation. In 1934, he worked out a detailed plan for the evacuation of Palestinian Arabs to Iraq which went through several versions before it was noticed as of late 1937. By early 1939, Norman's plan had come to the attention of Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Shertok, who were in London during February and March for the St. James Conference. Weizmann, especially, made serious efforts to promote it.

The initial plan, a 19-page typewritten memorandum in English dated February 1934, was entitled “An Approach to the Arab Question in Palestine.” [54] Its premise was that “immigration and possession of the land by definition are the basis of the reconstruction of the Jewish homeland.” At the same time, Norman acknowledged that Jewish colonization was a “genuine cause of concern” for the politicized Palestinian Arabs, since it entailed “taking over Palestine without the consent of the indigenous population.” Thus, the task facing the Yishuv was to ensure that “the Jews gradually are to fill up Palestine” while at the same time finding the Arab population a place to go, for “[the Arab population] cannot be exterminated, nor will it die out.”

Norman observed that as a result of the war between Turkey and Greece in 1921–22 “Turkey applied pressure to its large Greek minority to depart.” He noted, however, that the case was not analogous because “the Jews possess no lands on which the Arabs might be settled. It must be clear that if Arabs are to be induced to leave Palestine, some land must be discovered on which they can be placed.” He considered the “kingdom of Iraq” as a preferable destination “particularly [for] Arabs with agricultural experience,” and wanted the Iraqi government “to donate land and permit the importation of Arab farmers with their goods and chattels free of duty and visa fees.” Also “free transportation of persons, movable property, and livestock would have to be offered as well.” The collaboration of Arab political leaders and the Arab press would have to be obtained for this operation. Echoing earlier Zionist theories about the Palestinian character, he went on:

> It must be remembered that a transportation such as suggested by Arabs from Palestine to Iraq would not be a removal to a foreign country. To the usual Arab there is no difference between Palestine, Iraq, or any other part of the Arab world. The boundaries that have been instituted since the War are scarcely known to many of the Arabs. The language, customs, and religion are the same. It is true that a moving of any kind involves leaving familiar scenes, but it is not a tradition of the Arabs to be strongly attached to a locality. Their nomadic habits still have that much influence, even among the settled elements. [55]

The cost of settling a Palestinian family of six persons in Iraq was estimated at $300. Norman hoped that the indigenous population could be “bought out” and induced by economic rather than other means to evacuate Palestine:

> If the Jews ever succeed in acquiring a major part of Palestine a large number of Arabs perforce will have to leave the country and find homes elsewhere. If they are forced out inexorably as the result of Jewish pressure they will go with ill-will and probably will cherish an enmity towards the Jews that might persist for generations and that would render the position of the Jewish homeland precarious. The rest of the world, too, easily might come to sympathize with the Arabs. [56]

The first stage of the plan involved discussing the transfer “principle” at length “by men of seriousness,” who were “accustomed to looking upon Palestine affairs from the economic point of view, and who have influence in the powerful elements of the Jewish people.” At the same time, an indirect investigation could begin to determine whether the Iraqi government was interested in increasing its farming population and whether it owned lands on which the proposed evacuees might be placed. This investigation would have to be carried out with extreme discretion—“no inkling of the plan should be allowed to escape”—so as not to alert the Arabs. The next stage would be to form an “association” or “syndicate” of “experts” “with enough funds to investigate the economic possibilities” of the scheme, including “the cost of transporting Palestine Arabs, village by village, with their chattels and livestock overland to Iraq, possibly via the new road that has been built by the Iraq Petroleum Company.” [57]

Norman, a businessman, gave particular attention to the formation of the organizational apparatus in the event that the preliminary investigations were to indicate economic feasibility. He also outlined the stages of negotiations with the British Colonial Office and the government of Iraq. After successfully concluding the negotiations, “the time would have arrived for incorporating the company, which might be known as the Palestine and Iraq Colonization Company,” and converting the syndicate participation into stock. The company would need staff in Palestine and Iraq to handle the details of the negotiations with Arab landowners in Palestine,

to arrange the departure of the proposed evacuees and the sale of their lands to Jews, and their transportation, “free of charge,” to Iraq for resettlement. The main office of the company would be either in Jerusalem or in Haifa. In this connection, Norman wrote:

> Chaim H. Nathaniel, [a Jew] of Damascus, who is in the overland transportation business, has a fleet of suitable vehicles with experienced drivers. They make the trip regularly from Haifa to Baghdad in thirty hours. They should be well-fitted to move the Palestinian Arabs village by village, and there is little reason to doubt that a satisfactory arrangement can be made with Mr. Nathaniel. [58]

Norman suggested that land-purchasing and evacuation activities should concentrate first on “Arab lands in the coastal plains, suitable for agriculture.” Afterwards, “as it was discovered how to use the hill and valley lands profitably, attention would be turned to them too.” He also indicated that “various friendly personages” and “experts” of the Yishuv, such as Shabtai Levi, the land-purchasing agent of the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA) who had earlier been privy to Baron de Rothschild’s offers to assist in Arab evacuation to Iraq, “would certainly be very useful, and it cannot be questioned that he would be willing to be of assistance.”

Three years later, amid increasing confrontation between the Zionist Yishuv and Palestinians, Norman drafted an expanded and revised version of his plan. [59] In this version he elaborated on the underlying assumptions of his scheme, noting, with considerable detail, that the Zionist leadership’s public claim that the Yishuv had no “intention of dominating the Arabs” was hypocritical, and that “the Arab fears of becoming a minority are well-founded.” Taking into account these factors as well as the futility of expecting peace and cooperation between the two groups, Norman concluded: “If the Jews must have Palestine, but cannot have it while more than 800,000 Arabs live there, the Arabs must be induced to give it up and a considerable proportion of them to move elsewhere,” possibly to the “Shatt-el-Gharraf” area of Iraq. He ruled out Transjordan because it was “not conceded by the Jews as being permanently outside their colonizing area, and in view of the number of Jews requiring emigration from Europe they

can be expected to need it, and therefore it would be wasteful and unintelligent to think of settling the Palestine Arabs in Transjordan." [60]

In the revised plan, the cost of resettling a Palestinian family of six persons in Iraq was put at $1,800, which "should be more than ample. Arab peasants are accustomed to very simple houses. Obviously, the larger the family, the lower the per capita cost of erecting houses and preparing fields." These expenses would be met by the sale of the Arab lands in Palestine to Jews. Norman thought that his plan could be initiated by first finding one landlord "who could be made to see the material advantage" of the relocation to Iraq; his tenants would be moved "village by village, with the village organization undisturbed, and with the agents, or mukhtars, remaining at the heads of their respective villages." It would be "sufficient" in the first year to evacuate "not more than a dozen of villages," and if the operation succeeded the number could be increased to about 50,000 Arabs a year. Meanwhile, "a very careful and expertly managed educational campaign" could be launched among the Palestinians to facilitate the move, emphasizing the advantages of Iraq's "Shatt-el-Gharraf" region compared to the "difficult soil" of Palestine, and "of living in the independent Arab kingdom that once saw the highest point of Arab glory," compared to Palestine under British rule with the number and power of the Zionists on the rise. Norman added:

> Perhaps a widespread desire to go to Iraq as their true national home could be inculcated among the Palestine Arabs, similar to the emotional desire among the Jews of Eastern Europe to dwell in Palestine as their national home. [61]

The next stage of the revised plan centered on raising the initial capital subscription of $1 million from Jewish sources in the form of shares to an "Iraq Development Company," sending experts to Iraq "very quietly and unostentatiously" to check into the country's agricultural and irrigation possibilities, and investigating "the situation in Palestine with regard to land holdings among the Arabs and the values thereof, and to make preliminary inquiries as to transportation costs and other portable expenses." Meanwhile, contacts should be made with "representatives of every important Jewish financial agency having to do with Palestine to work out a

plan for the purchase or finance by settlers of the land in Palestine that would be secured from the Arabs, as soon as it was obtained." The object of this would be to enable the "Iraq Development Company" to turn over its capital rapidly so that it would be free to carry on building settlements in Iraq and transporting Arabs to them. Among these Zionist and Jewish institutions to be approached he listed: Jewish Colonization Association (ICA-the Baron Maurice de Hirsch Fund); Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA-Baron de Rothschild funds); Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael*); Palestine Foundation Fund (*Keren Hayesod* — the principal fund-raising agency of the World Zionist Organization); Anglo-Palestine Bank (Jewish Colonial Trust); General Mortgage Bank of Palestine; Palestine Corporation, Ltd.; Palestine Economic Corporation and subsidiaries; South African Palestine Corporation (Binyan Bank); American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; Refugee Economic Corporation; Emigre Charitable Trust; Emica Association; British Central Fund for Jewish Refugees; Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS); and the Alliance Israelite Universelle.

To secure the collaboration of the British government, the argument would be made that the Jews could satisfy Britain's need for "a loyal population in Palestine identified with British Empire interests" as opposed to the Arabs, who were eager to "sever their connection with Great Britain, as they were in Egypt and Iraq." Inducements to the Iraqi government for its "compliance with these requests" (including free and speedy admission of the transferees, citizenship to be granted within a year, and the provision of free land) would be that Iraq's political and economic strength would be enhanced by a dense settlement of Arabs from outside Iraq, which would also make the costs of irrigating the "Shattel-Gharraf" area more economically viable. [62]

After receiving encouraging reactions from "a certain number of leading personages in the U.S." in the late summer of 1937, Norman revised his plan yet again in January 1938. [63] The revisions were relatively minor, the main substantive modification concerning the ordering of the stages of implementation: in the 1938 version, the first step would be to determine whether or not the Iraqi government was interested in the plan and willing to arrange financing for the resettlement. The "personages" to whom

Norman referred included Felix M. Warburg, a New York banker who played an important role in Zionist-controlled and Yishuv institutions. He was a leading figure in the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and helped found the Palestine Economic Corporation; he was also a director of *Keren Hayesod.* In 1929 he became chairman of the Jewish Agency Administrative Committee and remained a member of the Agency's Council until his death in late 1937. Norman reported:

> Warburg encouraged me to go to England and find someone who would be capable of obtaining the information still needed. It was assumed that I could not obtain the information by going to Iraq myself, since under the prevailing conditions in the Near East, the motives of any Jews would be suspect, and instead of obtaining information he probably only would arouse antagonism. Therefore, it was essential to send a man who was not a Jew and who at the same time would be "person grata" to the Iraqians [*sic*]. [64]

Norman arrived in London on 29 November 1937 and discussed the subject with "a certain number of people, all of whom offered me all the help of which they were capable." These included, among others, Vladimir Jabotinsky; James-Armand de Rothschild, the son of Edmond de Rothschild and president of the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association; Norman Bentwich, the former attorney general of the British Mandatory government in Palestine and a professor of International Relations at the Hebrew University; Leonard Stein, a close associate of Weizmann, a former political secretary of the World Zionist Organization (1920–29), and an honorary legal adviser to the Jewish Agency; Harry Sacher, a former member of the Jewish Agency Executive (1929–31); and Sir Robert Waley Cohen, an Anglo-Jewish industrialist and chairman of the Zionist Economic Board for Palestine. Norman met Jabotinsky on 2 December, and wrote in his diary:

> He (Jabotinsky) has already read a copy of my memorandum on Iraq....He is very much in favor of the idea. He said, however, that it will be very difficult to move the Arabs to leave the Land of Israel....Jabotinsky raised an original idea according to which, if the plan will reach a point at which Iraq would be willing to collaborate and issue an invitation for the Palestinian Arabs to immigrate to it, the

> World Zionist Organization would be clever if it pronounced itself publicly to be against Arab immigration, then the Arabs will be certain that the plan is not originally Jewish, and that the Jews want them to stay in the country in order to exploit them, so they will be very eager to go to Iraq. There is a very Machiavellian nature to this, but this could be a healthy policy towards suspicious and ignorant Arab public. Jabotinsky said that if his Revisionist New Zionist Organization will issue an announcement at the right moment against Arab transfer from the Land of Israel, this will create a very great impact on the Arabs to the extent of creating the opposite, and they will get out. [65]

At the end of 1937 and in early 1938 Norman continued to lobby in London for his scheme, which he presented to Colonial Office officials in January 1938. [66]Through Walter S. Cohen, he was put in touch with H. T. Montague Bell, former editor-in-chief of the British weekly *Great Britain and the East* , who had spent three years in Baghdad and who Norman "found to be entirely in sympathy with the objectives of my scheme." He employed Bell to go to Iraq and conduct discreet investigations and "if possible also to implant in the minds of the leading personages of Iraq the germ of the idea that their country's greatest need is immigration," and that it must be made up of Palestinian peasants. Norman hoped that his scheme would make "its initial public appearance as one that had originated in the minds of the Iraqi statesmen for the good of their country." [67]

Bell arrived in Baghdad on 15 February 1938, and remained in Iraq until 28 March. He had been told that the "best way to obtain cooperation for such a scheme...was not to openly carry a new idea to the Iraqians [*sic*], but my [Norman's] suggestion to make it seem that the idea had originated in their own minds." To this end, Bell said he was in Iraq to write some articles for the British and American press on the progress of the country since independence in 1932. This objective was supposed to make it seem reasonable for him "to ask searching questions of all the leading people, and thus to cause them to formulate the answer along the lines we desired," Norman recorded. He had an audience with the king, and the prime minister gave a dinner for him which was attended by the entire cabinet. While in Iraq, Bell also had talks with the British manager of a British company that had a cotton growing concession on land near Baghdad. When told that the

company was short of labor, “Bell suggested to the manager that he should import some 500 or 600 Arab families from Palestine” to work the land. [68]

Upon his return to England, Bell pursued this suggestion with the officers of the company in the hope of inducing Palestinian emigration. “If they do so,” Norman wrote, “it will provide us with a concrete example of Palestinian Arab peasants who have been transferred to Iraq...this will assist us materially in negotiations later with the Iraqian [*sic*] Government to induce it to facilitate a really large-scale migration of Arabs from Palestine to Iraq.” The chief benefit to Zionists underlying this scheme was supposed to be made to appear “only incidental.” In his report to Norman on his trip, Bell claimed that he had managed to arouse considerable interest on the part of leading Iraqis, “without their knowing, however, that is what he came there for.” In London, Bell remained on Norman’s payroll, having been commissioned to write a number of articles for publication with the sole purpose of presenting the case that Iraq’s future progress could be advanced only by encouraging immigration into the country. Copies of these published articles were to be sent to all leading Iraqi politicians “in the hope that they will be stimulated for further thought on the subject.” [69]

Bell’s articles appeared in *The London Times* throughout the spring and summer of 1938. One of these articles, about the problems of the Kuwaiti principality, was intended as a diversionary tactic “to establish Mr. Bell as a student” of Asian affairs in general, “so that there could not be a suspicion that he was particularly interested in Iraq.” [70] In a long article, entitled “Iraq Today” and published in *The London Times* on 27 October 1938, he emphasized the need for immigration to develop Iraq, “without, however, mentioning Palestine as a possible source of such immigration, in order not to arouse the Palestinians and so as not to become involved in controversial issues.” [71] This article was mentioned in the House of Commons on 24 November, in the course of the general debate on Palestine, by an ardent champion of the Zionist cause, Captain Casalet, who cited Bell’s article “as his authority” for his claim that Iraq would help solve the Palestine conflict by absorbing Palestinians. [72] Bell returned to Iraq that same month to stay the winter, in an attempt to exercise an indirect influence on Iraqi politicians, among them Nuri al-Said and Tawfiq al-Suwaidi. He took one of his daughters with him and they rented a comfortable house in Baghdad.

To the Iraqis, he claimed that he had returned both for a rest and to pursue, as a journalist, “his studies of Central Asian affairs.” [73] Bell continued on Norman’s payroll until mid-1940. Towards the end of that year, Weizmann arranged for Bell’s retainer to be paid, in part by the World Zionist Organization. [74]

Meanwhile, Norman was trying to promote his plan in the United States. He was informed that Jewish Agency officials had learned about his scheme for “a large scale transfer” of Palestinians to Iraq “and that they looked upon it with considerable favour.” [75] He discussed the issue in November 1938 with Louis Brandeis, a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, advisor to U.S. presidents, and an important Zionist voice in the United States; Maurice J. Karpf, an American member of the Jewish Agency Executive; and Sir Robert Walley Cohen in London, with whom he communicated by telephone. On 31 December 1938, he returned to London, where he remained until 25 March 1939.

In mid-January 1939, Norman met Pinhas Rutenberg, the former member of the Jewish Agency Executive and chairman of the Yishuv’s National Council who had been deeply involved in Weizmann’s 1930 transfer scheme for evacuating Palestinian peasants to Transjordan, pursuing it with Emir Abdallah during the Peel Commission’s deliberations in London in the spring of 1937. Norman recorded: “I found at once that his ideas and mine had much in common, although he had not considered a transfer of peasants from Palestine to Iraq.” However, Rutenberg suggested that launching economic enterprises in surrounding Arab countries with Zionist partnership “might attract some of the attention of the Arabs that is now focused on Palestine and there might even develop a migration of Arab labor from Palestine to these countries.” After several discussions “it was mutually agreed between Mr. Rutenberg and myself that it would be desirable for us to cooperate with one another.” Consequently, Norman decided to stay in London through the winter in order to explore with Rutenberg the practical possibilities for working together on the transfer scheme. [76]

It was during that same period that he met the three most important leaders of the Jewish Agency, Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Shertok, who were in

London in connection with the St. James Conference on Palestine held in February and March. Norman "found that they were very much interested in the scheme. They had given thought to bringing up something of the kind at the conference"—apparently a reference to the ideas on transfer to Iraq that Ben-Gurion had outlined in his memorandum to the Zionist Actions Committee in December 1938. They were also "most willing to cooperate" with Norman's tactics of making his plan appear to come from the Iraqi side. Norman wrote: "I saw them on many occasions while I was in London, and developed a strong feeling of mutual endeavor with them. They caused me to be one of the few to be invited to attend all the meetings of the Jewish delegation to the [St. James's] conference." [77] In the spring of the same year, Weizmann commended Norman on his activities in a letter to another American Zionist, Solomon Goldman, who was also involved in this international campaign: "I knew that Mr. Edward Norman was dealing with it very discreetly and [I] believe very ably." [78] And again in June, Weizmann wrote to Norman: "I need not tell you that I shall do what I can to support your efforts, for which I have the highest admiration." [79]

Both Weizmann and Norman lobbied for an American involvement in the Zionist transfer plan to Iraq during World War II and attempted to link this scheme to American war aims and efforts. They argued that the transfer of Palestinian agricultural labor to Iraq was necessary for producing locally the foodstuffs required for American, South African, Australian, and British soldiers in various war theaters, which would spare the Allies the need to rely on imported supplies from other non-Middle Eastern regions. Norman explained: "No doubt intelligent and careful propaganda methods would have to be used. Perhaps at first people would be asked to go to Iraq merely as paid agricultural laborers," later "to become permanent settlers." Norman added that there were a number of American agronomists then working in Saudi Arabia "whose services might be available in connection with planning for the development and cultivation of the Shatt al-Hai in Iraq," the newly proposed destination of the Palestinian transferees. [80] It is likely that Norman obtained the services of the American soil expert, Walter Clay Lowdermilk, who was assistant chief of the U.S. Conservation Service. Lowdermilk, a pro-Zionist Christian and a member of the American Palestine Committee (an organization of prominent Jewish and non-Jewish Americans that aimed at mobilizing American public support for the

Yishuv), had visited Iraq in early 1939 and attended the opening of the Kut al-Amara Barrage, or diversion dam, on the Tigris. Three years later he published a book called *Palestine, Land of Promise* , in which he advocated Palestinian transfer to the same region in Iraq proposed in Norman's secret memoranda. [81]

Meanwhile, Bell's efforts in London on behalf of the Zionists elicited negative responses from British officials of both the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office. In early February 1941, Sir Harold Downie of the Colonial Office pointed out that Bell's activities not only would serve no British interests but were likely to embarrass the British government. [82] Another high-ranking official of the Colonial Office, J. S. Bennett, described the Norman transfer plan to Iraq as amateurish and impractical; it could not possibly succeed, he wrote, since there was not the slightest reason to assume that the Palestinian Arabs would accept a voluntary transfer or that the Iraqi government, with its known pan-Arab sentiments, would ask for their evacuation to Iraq. [83]

This did not deter Norman and his supporters from pursuing the Iraqi scheme, pinning their hopes increasingly on the American administration. In October 1945 Norman appealed directly to the new U.S. president, Harry Truman, claiming that "the solution of political questions by means of transfer has become a recognized procedure," and that "the difficulties that are met with in Palestine arise because of the presence of the Arabs, who might have been transferred to other locations outside Palestine." He mentioned that the British Labor Party Conference resolution of December 1944 in favor of transferring the Arabs out of Palestine had failed to suggest a destination. He explained that in order to render the British Labor party endorsement of "tangible value," "a suitable place of resettlement" was needed and that he was writing to inform the president of a "promising one":

> Several years ago I made a thorough study of the capacity of Iraq to absorb a large proportion of the Palestinian Arabs. My findings, which are based on generally-accepted facts, indicate that in every way the resettling of some 750,000 Palestinian Arab peasants in Iraq involved no practical (as distinguished from political) difficulties. [84]

Norman proposed to turn over to the president the “detailed facts and figures” and “supporting authoritative data” that he had collected. This he did in a memorandum dated 1 November 1945. [85]

Norman’s “voluntary” transfer scheme to Iraq came to nothing. It is interesting to note, however, that during the Palestinian refugee exodus of 1948, members of the Israeli government Transfer Committee, including Ezra Danin and Zalman Lifschitz, insisted on obtaining “Norman’s treasures”—transfer memoranda and related materials he had been writing and collecting over the last fourteen years—both through Jewish Agency and Foreign Ministry channels. Norman agreed, but demanded “that a personal letter be sent to him by Mr. Shertok (and by Mr. Shertok only), expressing recognition for all he has done in this particular field and for his putting at the disposal of the Israeli Government the result of his earlier activities.” [86]

The Philby Episode

The Zionist leadership never lost its interest in reaching an agreement with neighboring Arab countries to facilitate the evacuation of the Arab population of Palestine. Emir Abdallah had been approached in connection with Weizmann’s transfer plan to Transjordan during the Peel Commission’s deliberations in 1937; another such episode involved Zionist overtures in 1939 to King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia through H. St. John Philby, the maverick British orientalist and advisor to the king, just after World War II broke out. The thrust of Philby’s maneuvering was to help Ibn Saud achieve a dominant role in a future Arab federation and to secure financial aid to the Saudi kingdom, then facing financial difficulties.

Philby’s main contact in London was Lewis Namier, the renowned historian and a close associate of Weizmann who had been the political secretary of the Zionist Executive in 1929–30 and who had played an influential role in the Jewish Agency lobbying during the winter of 1937 that led to the inclusion of compulsory transfer in the Peel Commission’s recommendations. Namier, since 1938 political adviser to the Jewish Agency Executive in London (a post he maintained until 1945), arranged a meeting in London between Philby, Weizmann, and Shertok on 6 October

1939. According to Namier, it was Philby's idea that Palestine "should be handed over completely to the Jews, clear of Arab population except for a 'Vatican City' in the old city of Jerusalem." In return, the Jews should support Ibn Saud's bid for the leadership of a future Arab federation. According to Namier, Philby also "suggested the sum of £20,000,000 for Ibn Saud in case the scheme was carried out in full." [87] Weizmann had replied that while the Zionists were ready to promise "economic advantages," they could not give political promises which they had no power to fulfill. He did add, however, that very influential American support for such a settlement could be anticipated and that "he expected to see President Roosevelt and to gain his support for some big scheme of such a character." [88]

According to Shertok's account of the meeting, he suggested that the money would be given "in order to finance the resettlement of the Arabs who would be uprooted from the Land of Israel." [89] He noted inquiring as to where such a large amount of money could be obtained, and Weizmann responded that "he would go to the President of the United States and request aid for the establishment of a Jewish state and the transfer of the Palestinian Arabs." [90]

Namier's assertion that Philby made the initial proposal of Arab transfer and suggested the sum to be paid to Ibn Saud must be examined critically. Namier's had served between 1915 and 1920 on the staff of the propaganda, information, and political intelligence departments of the British Foreign Office, and the possibility of at least an element of disinformation cannot be discounted. Furthermore, the idea of a complete transfer save for a "Vatican City" in the old city of Jerusalem seems less likely to have come from Philby, a convert to Islam, than from Namier, who had always been drawn to Catholicism and who indeed was baptized a few years later. This is not to suggest that Philby was an unwilling collaborator (although his own account presents a different version of the talks). [91] What appears certain, however, is that the 20 million figure was suggested not by Philby but by Weizmann. Weizmann himself gave the following account of the money proposal:

> [Philby said]: “It reduces itself to money, in form of a loan, and to technical assistance, and to moral assistance”: I [Weizmann] said: “As to money, you know my money is in the pockets of every Jew throughout the world. If I can say that a great Arab leader is willing to come and cooperate with us it would help. Tell me, how much do you want? If you say one million, I will say that it is too cheap. If you say 50 million, I will easily say I haven’t got it. But perhaps 20 millions will do it...perhaps I can get it.” [92]

One month later Namier met with Mrs. Dugdale (Blanche Campbell Balfour, a niece of the author of the Balfour Declaration and a trusted adviser to Weizmann) and drew up a relatively detailed contingency scheme incorporating the chief elements of the Zionist understanding with Philby. [93] In March of the following year, Weizmann wrote to Philby introducing him “to a friend of mine, Mr. Edward Norman of New York, who has been working for several years on a proposal for large-scale development in Irak [*sic*], which I think has some merit and in which you may be interested.” [94]

However, Weizmann’s hopes for an approach to Ibn Saud through Philby and under the joint auspices of Roosevelt and Churchill did not materialize. Ibn Saud refused to be drawn into serious negotiations with the Zionists. Colonel Harold B. Hoskins, a consultant to the State Department and Roosevelt’s personal envoy to the Middle East, was persuaded after discussions with Ibn Saud and Philby that there was little likelihood of striking a deal with Ibn Saud. He also reported that Philby had been taken to task by the Saudi king for suggesting a “Zionist bribe.” [95]

The British Labor Party Resolution of 1944

Zionist lobbying efforts in England for Arab transfer out of Palestine resulted in the British Labor party conference’s adoption of a pro-Zionist resolution in December 1944. The resolution read, *inter alia* :

> Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land and let their settlement elsewhere be carefully organized and generously financed.... Indeed we should re-examine also the possibility of

> extending the present Palestinian boundaries, by agreement with Egypt, Syria or Transjordan. [96]

The resolution was drafted by Hugh Dalton, an enthusiastic supporter of Zionist maximalist aims who once called for the establishment of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River and in the Sinai Peninsula. Dalton had long-standing ties with the Zionists. As a professor at the London School of Economics some years earlier, he had counted among his students Moshe Shertok and David Hacohen (later managing director of the Solel Bone, Histadrut's large construction company). At the time Weizmann submitted his transfer proposal to the British Labor government for consideration in 1930, Dalton was under-secretary to Arthur Henderson, the foreign secretary, and in close contact with the Zionist establishment in London, including Namier and Weizmann. Dalton was also friendly with Berl Locker, the political advisor to the Zionist Executive in London (whose numerous links with the British Labor party also helped to secure the resolution's adoption).

The motives behind the adoption of the Dalton draft by the Labor Party conference were complex and beyond the scope of this study. It is well known, however, that the party included very influential Zionists among its executive members. Apart from Dalton and Arthur Henderson, these included Harold Joseph Laski, a political economist and for a time chairman of the party, who "expressed most emotional gratitude" to Dalton for his draft. [97]

The draft resolution had been endorsed by the Labor Party Executive and published on 24 April 1944 in the report prepared for its annual convention which was held eight months later. An earlier version had been conveyed to the Jewish Agency Executive in London in November 1943 and its wording had been changed in consultation with Weizmann. The Dalton draft came up for discussion at the 7 May 1944 meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive and at the Mapai Central Committee meeting the following day. The protocol of the JAE meeting described the draft as "very encouraging" and noted that it was received with "great satisfaction" by Ben-Gurion. At the same time, Ben-Gurion expressed uneasiness at the draft's wording. The public linkage of Jewish immigration and the reconstitution of Palestine

into a Jewish state with transfer as a *condicio sine qua non* could work against the Zionist leadership's intensive campaign to have Britain rescind its 1939 restrictions on Jewish immigration: if, as the Zionists maintained, Palestine with its current Arab population lacked "absorptive capacity," then the British could argue that they were correct to limit immigration. [98] In closed deliberations, of course, Ben-Gurion continued to express without restraint his conviction that Arab transfer was inherent in the very conception of Zionism; at that same May meeting, for example, he reiterated that transfer was "the right idea":

> Zionism is a transfer of the Jews. Regarding the transfer of the Arabs this is much easier than any other transfer. There are Arab states in the vicinity...and it is clear that if the Arabs are removed [to these states] this will improve their condition and not the contrary." [99]

Moreover, despite Zionist reluctance publicly to associate immigration with transfer, the linkage was taken for granted. At a 20 June 1944 Jewish Agency Executive meeting where Ben-Gurion's hope of bringing in one million Jewish immigrants to Palestine was discussed, Moshe Shapira, who for many years had been director of the JAE Department of Immigration, reminded Ben-Gurion and other participants of "the matter of Arab transfer, although not through compulsion." Shapira specified: "When we bring a plan for transferring one million Jews to the Land of Israel we *cannot avoid* the transfer" [100] [emphasis added].

With regard to the Labor party draft resolution, Ben-Gurion was gratified that the "Gentiles" were endorsing the concept, which was beginning to "penetrate" into Western minds. And, he warned, even if the Labor party conference scheduled for December would end up by dropping the draft resolution (which in fact it did not), "we must not see in it a setback" because ultimately the question would be decided after the war. Ben-Gurion explained that the Holocaust had not yet been fully exploited to the benefit of Zionism because the Allies were still preoccupied with the pursuit of victory; the greatest opportunity for the Zionists was bound to emerge after the war.

The Jewish Agency Executive discussions of May and December 1944 demonstrate that the 1938 consensus in favor of Arab evacuation had not wavered. Eliahu Dobkin of Mapai, then director of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department who had been a deputy member of the Executive since 1937 (and who was to become a full member in 1945), said that he failed to understand the need for caution expressed by some of his colleagues on the transfer issue, given that the same solution was about to be applied in Europe. Similarly, David Werner Senator argued that the Palestinians' evacuation to Iraq was both morally and politically justified since the same evacuation policy was to be applied to the German inhabitants of Poland and Czechoslovakia. [101] At the Executive meeting of 16 December, Werner Senator criticized Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, his former colleagues of the Ihud organization who continued to advocate binationalism and preach morality in politics, stating that he felt no moral qualms about advocating forcible Arab removal: considering the catastrophe of European Jewry "against the transfer of one million Arabs, then with a clean and easy conscience I declare that even more drastic acts are sanctioned." [102]

In the event, the Arab transfer resolution adopted by the British Labor party conference of December 1944 did not become part of the Labor platform when the party came to power in 1945, and Labor Zionists continued to seek Western endorsement of the concept. As a footnote to the episode, the State of Israel later honored Hugh Dalton for the long-standing support for Zionism that had culminated in his draft resolution of 1944: in 1950 his name was given to a newly established moshav settlement on the site of an evacuated Arab village in eastern upper Galilee.

The Ben-Horin Plan, 1943–48

Eliahu Ben-Horin was a Revisionist publicist, a close associate of Jabotinsky, and an editor of the Yishuv's Hebrew newspaper *Doar Hayom* (which had published Ussishkin's April 1930 article advocating the removal of the Arabs from Palestine). In 1935, when the Revisionists seceeded from the World Zionist Organization and established the New Zionist Organization, Ben-Horin was elected to the world executive of the new organization, operating out of London from 1937 to 1940 and from New

York from 1940 to 1943. After World War II, he served as adviser to the American Zionist Emergency Council and continued to lobby for Zionist causes in the United States.

Ben-Horin's plan for Arab transfer to Iraq or a "united Iraq-Syrian state," which first had been put forward in 1943 in his book *The Middle East: Crossroads of History* , is important because it served as the basis of former U.S. President Herbert Hoover's own plan. [103] Ben-Horin's emphasis on Iraq as a potential destination for Palestine's evacuees shows familiarity with Edward Norman's memoranda as well as his behind-the-scenes contacts and activities aimed at linking the Zionist transfer plan to American war efforts. [104] Not surprisingly, Ben-Horin's arguments also bear the stamp of his mentor, Jabotinsky.

As a Revisionist Zionist who believed in the establishment of a "pure" Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River, Ben-Horin wrote:

> I suggest that the Arabs of Palestine and Transjordania be transferred to Iraq, or a united Iraq-Syrian state. That means the shifting of about 1,200,000 persons. A larger number were involved in the Greco-Turkish exchange of population; many more in the internal shifts in Russia....
>
> The Palestinian Arabs will not be removed to a foreign land but to an Arab land....The distance between their old and new homelands is small, involving no crossing of oceans or seas, and the climatic conditions are the same. If the transfer and the colonization project are well planned and systematically carried out, the Palestinian fellah will get better soil and more promising life conditions than he can ever expect to obtain in Palestine. The city Arab, too, can find a much wider field for his activities and ambitions within the framework of a larger and purely Arab state unit. [105]

Ben-Horin suggested that the "shifting" of the Arab populations of Palestine and Transjordan to Iraq, and the simultaneous transfer of Iraqi, Yemeni, and Syrian Jews to Palestine, could be executed within eighteen months. "Should the above course be adopted, western Palestine [i.e., west

of the Jordan River] alone would offer to Jewish immigration all the land at present cultivated by the Arabs," and "then there is Transjordania with considerable areas of fertile soil, and good irrigation possibilities." Both the speedy transformation of Arab Palestine into a Jewish state and the evacuation of its Arab inhabitants into Iraq or a Syrian-Iraqi "condominium administration" could be achieved with active international assistance. [106] The evacuation project should be carried out with "firmness." He added:

> such a solution being both just and practicable, the Jews and the Arabs will soon develop good neighborly relations....The one imperative pre-requisite to such a happy development is the absolute determination on the part of the major nations that will dictate the peace and lay the foundation for future world-order-that this and no other solution of the Arab-Jewish problems be adopted and carried into effect. [107]

Like Edward Norman, Ben-Horin appealed to the U.S. administration to support the Zionist drive and "dictate" Arab evacuation. His efforts appeared especially to focus on obtaining the support of Herbert Hoover, the former U.S. president, a Zionist sympathizer who had been privy to Norman's transfer plan to Iraq. [108]

Ben-Horin first met Hoover in late 1943. According to him, the meeting led "to a close contact with a great American....Hoover's interest is aroused in one idea outlined in my book....It is the plan for an Arab-Jewish exchange of populations between Palestine and Iraq." [109] Hoover apparently agreed to join the Zionist campaign in support of the Ben-Horin plan. Two years later the so-called "Hoover Plan"—in fact, a repackaging of Ben-Horin's initiative—was launched. [110]

The Hoover plan, unveiled on 19 November 1945 in the *New York World-Telegram* , proposed that the "sane and practical solution" to the Palestine problem was to resettle the Arabs in Iraq, where land could be much improved through irrigation, the focus of Hoover's attention. Under the plan, Iraqi land development would be financed to enable the country to receive the Palestinian transferees, which in turn would "clear Palestine completely for a large Jewish immigration and colonization." Iraq, in turn, would gain a much-needed agricultural population.

The plan was submitted to the White House, [111] and public support was forthcoming from U.S. Supreme Court Justice and presidential advisor Felix Frankfurter, who had been a legal adviser to the Zionist delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 at which Aaronsohn and Weizmann had discussed internally the proposal of an Arab transfer to Iraq. Frankfurter served on the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs in the United States; he was also associated with U.S. Zionist leader Louis Brandeis, a supporter of Norman's transfer plan and activities. Support for the so-called Hoover Plan also came from Abba Hillel Silver, [112] then the chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council to which Ben-Horin was an advisor, and later (1945–48) chairman of the Jewish Agency's American section. The American Zionist Emergency Council, while concealing the fact that the plan had originated from one of its functionaries, came up with a carefully worded public statement:

> every man of good will...will welcome Mr Hoover's plan as an expression of constructive statesmanship. When all the long-accepted remedies seem to fail, it is time to consider new approaches. The Hoover plan certainly represents a new approach, formulated by an unprejudiced mind well trained in statesmanship, relief and rehabilitation. Should they, the Arabs, respond to the idea, we shall be happy to cooperate with the great powers and the Arabs in bringing about the materialization of the Hoover Plan. [113]

The Ben-Horin-Hoover team was joined by Elish'a M. Friedman, a New York economics consultant. [114] Hoover stated publicly that, being an engineer by profession, he wished to achieve "an engineering" solution to the Palestine conflict. [115] He gathered a group of engineers around him in New York to discuss the practical and technical aspects of the plan. He also attempted to interest the American Jewish millionaire Bernard Baruch in the plan, and to win the support of the *New York Times* proprietor Arthur Sulzberger. [116]

Until the late 1940s, Hoover was active in the attempt to remove the Palestinians to Iraq. [117] In May 1949, during the last stage of the Palestinian refugee exodus, *Harper's* magazine published an article by Ben-Horin entitled "From Palestine to Israel." The editor noted that in an earlier article

in the magazine's December 1944 issue, Ben-Horin had advocated a plan which at the time

> looked far-fetched...that the Arabs of Palestine be transferred to Iraq and resettled there. Now, with thousands of Arab refugees from Palestine facing a dismal future, the transfer idea appears to be a likely bet...in view of the sound character of Mr. Ben-Horin's earlier judgements and prophecies, we feel we can bank on his word about present-day Israel: 'It works.'" [118]

***

In conclusion, it hardly bears mentioning that the various transfer plans discussed in this study do not all carry the same weight. Certainly, those put forward or supported by mainstream Yishuv (labor) leaders and leading members of the Jewish Agency Executive, the Jewish National Fund, and the Palestine Land Development Company (*Hevrat Hachsharat Hayishuu*), as well as the official transfer committees, are far more important than those put forward by a Revisionist Zionist like Ben-Horin or an American Jew living in New York like Edward Norman. The few critics of the transfer schemes in the Yishuv, notably members of the Hashomer Hatza'ir movement, dismissed the tranfer plans as "dangerous," "anti-socialist," and even ill-advised. Nonetheless, the general support they received and the attempts to promote them by mainstream official and Labor Zionists, particularly those leaders who were to play decisive roles in 1948-Ben-Gurion, Weizmann, Shertok, Kaplan, Golda Meyerson, Weitz, and so on-highlight the ideological intent that made the Palestinian refugee exodus in 1948 possible.

Notes

1. Ben-Gurion's memorandum dated 17 December 1938, S25/7627, CZA. The P£10 million envisaged by Ben-Gurion was not supposed to come from the Jewish Agency annual budget (which was much smaller than that), but apparently from Zionist financiers such as de Rothschild and Horst, as well as loans raised from commercial banks through the hoped-for guarantees from the British and American governments.

2. Cited in Joseph Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism* , pp. 164–65, 189. According to Weizmann, Attlee nodded assent when the transfer was proposed.

3. Locker was in charge of the WZO's Organization Department in London between 1931 and 1935. In 1945 he again became a member of the Zionist Executive and in 1955 he became a Knesset member.

4. See, for instance, Ussishkin's conversation with Weitz on 22 June 1941, in Weitz's Diary, A 246/7; CZA, pp. 1169–70; Weizmann's Letter to Solomon Goldman, 28 April 1939, in the *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XIX, Series A, Letter No. 52.

5. See minutes of the meeting on 24 September 1941, CAB 65/23. His pro-Zionist Secretary for India, Leopold Amery, endorsed the idea; see his letter to Churchill dated 4 October 1941, cited in Nathaniel Katzburg, *Mediniyut Bemavoch: Mediniyut Britania Beeretz—Yisrael* [The British Policy in the Land of Israel 1940–1945] (Jerusalem: 1977), p. 18.

6. *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. II, Series B, p. 428.

7. Ibid., p. 442.

8. Cited in Yosef Nedava, "British Plans for the Resettlement of Palestinian Arabs" (Hebrew), *Haumah* , no. 89 (Winter 1987/88), pp. 133, 136.

9. David Ben-Gurion, "Lines for Zionist Policy," 15 October 1941, Z4/14. 632, CZA.

10. Ibid., Weizmann wrote in a letter dated 28 April 1939 to American Zionist leader Solomon Goldman about the possibility of the acquisition of a large tract of land belonging to the Druze in the Galilee and eastern Carmel. "The realisation of this project would mean the emigration of 10,000 Arabs [to Jebel Druze in Syria], the acquisition of 300,000 dunams." "It would also create a significant precedent if 10,000 Arabs were to emigrate peacefully of their own volition, which no doubt would be

followed by others." *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XIX, Series A, Letter No. 52, pp. 54–55. No such scheme materialized.

11. Ben-Gurion, "Lines for Zionist Policy," 15 October 1941.

12. At a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive on 20 June 1944, Ben-Gurion explained that the Greek exodus from Asia Minor had begun after the collapse of the Greek forces before the Turkish army and before any agreement was made on uprooting all the Greeks from Turkey. Protocol of the meeting, confidential 39/2. 52a. In Yosef Heller, *The Struggle for the State* , p. 357.

13. Ben-Gurion, "Lines for Zionist Policy," 15 October 1941.

14. Ben-Gurion, "Test of Fulfillment," *Jewish Frontier* (New York) 9, no. 6 (June 1942), p. 13.

15. Heller, *The Struggle for the State* , pp. 42–43.

16. C. Weizmann, "Palestine's Role in the Solution of the Jewish Problem," *Foreign Affairs* 20, no. 2 (January 1942), pp. 337–38.

17. *FRUS: Foreign Relations of United States: 1943* , IV, p. 776, cited in Michael Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 23.

18. The first five volumes of the diary were edited and published in 1965: Yosef Weitz, *Yomani Veigrotai Lebanim* [My Diary and Letters to the Children] (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1965). This massive diary was started in 1932 and continued until Weitz's death in 1970.

19. Weitz Diary, A 246/7, entry dated 20 December 1940, pp. 1090–91, CZA.

20. Ibid., entry dated 18 March 1941, pp. 1125–26.

21. Ibid., entry dated 20 March 1941, p. 1127.

22. Ibid., entry dated 17 July 1941, p. 1204.

23. See A. Granott, *Agrarian Reform and the Record of Israel* (London: 1956), p. 28.

24. Weitz Diary, A 246/7, entry for 13 February 1941, p. 1117, CZA.

25. Ibid., entry dated 4 May 1941, p. 1142.

26. Ibid., entry dated 13 May 1941, p. 1149.

27. Ibid., entry dated 26 June 1941, pp. 1172–73.

28. Ibid., entry dated 22 June 1941, p. 1169.

29. Ibid., entry dated 22 June 1941, pp. 1169–70.

30. Ibid., entry dated 11 July 1941, p. 1181.

31. Ibid., entry dated 10 July 1941, pp. 1180–81.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., entry dated 28 August 1941, p. 1207.

34. Anita Shapira wrote in this connection: “He saw in it a core of historical truth and the means of a long-term solution. As an example, he cited the transfer of Greeks and Turks in Asia Minor after the First World War, which had solved painful problems for both populations. He had been gratified when the British Labor Party conference reasserted the party’s support for the Zionist movement and cited population transfer by peaceful means and by mutual consent as part of the proposed solution of the Palestine question.” Anita Shapira, *Berl: The Biography of a Socialist Zionist, 1887–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 292. Compare this account with Katznelson’s support of compulsory transfer (see pp. 108–9). On the status of Katznelson in socialist Zionism, see Amos Oz, “Has Israel Altered its Visions?” *New York Times Magazine* , 11 July 1982.

35. Berl Katznelson, *Ketavim* [Writings] (Tel Aviv: 1949), Vol. 12, pp. 241, 244. The Jews in Birobidjan have never exceeded one-third of the total

population. Shapira wrote that, like Katznelson, Tabenkin, the leader of Hakibbutz Hameuhad, welcomed the idea of Arab transfer and also cited the “example” of transferring the German-speaking population from the Volga province to Siberia by Stalin during the World War II. Shapira, *Berl: The Biography of a Socialist Zionist, 1887–1944* , p. 335.

36. Cited in Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs* , p. 304.

37. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting of 12 June 1938, in Jerusalem, confidential, Vol. 28, no. 53, CZA.

38. Weitz Diary, A 246/8, entries dated 11 August 1941, p. 1202; 2 September 1941, p. 1210; and 1 September 1941, p. 1209, CZA.

39. Ibid., entry dated 5 September 1941, pp. 1212–13.

40. Ibid., entry dated 7 September 1941, p. 1213.

41. Ibid., entries dated 10 and 11 September 1941, pp. 1214–15.

42. Ibid., entry dated 18 September 1941, pp. 1215–16.

43. Ibid., entry dated 18 September 1941, p. 1216.

44. Ibid., entry dated 19 September 1941, p. 1217.

45. Ibid., entry dated 4 October 1941, pp. 1224–25.

46. During his stay in Syria Sasson met Mujhim al-Sha’alan (on 3 September 1941), the grandson of Nuri al-Sha’lan of the Rowallah tribesmen who, according to Sasson, expressed his readiness to assist the Zionists. Eliahu Sasson, *Baderech el Hashalom* [On the Road to Peace] (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 1978), p. 235.

47. Weitz Diary, A 246/7, entry for 21 October 1941, p. 1237, CZA.

48. Ibid., entry dated 25 November 1941, p. 1256.

49. Weitz Diary, A 246/8, entry dated 31 May 1942, p. 1337, CZA.

50. Ibid., entry dated 1 June 1942, p. 1338.

51. Ibid., entry dated 10 September 1942, p. 1390. Sprintzak was secretary-general of the Histadrut between 1945 and 1948; chairman of the Provisional Council of State in 1948; and speaker of the first Knesset in 1949.

52. Ibid., entry dated 29 September 1942, p. 1400.

53. See Yosef Weitz, in *Ma'ariv* , 18 October 1967, p. 26.

54. A 246/29, CZA. Norman's memos are kept together with the Weitz Diary, in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. This version, written in New York City and dated February 1937, is 27 typed pages long plus 20 pages of references. A 246/29, CZA.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid. In later memoranda Norman referred to a transfer to the "Shatt el Hai" region of Iraq.

63. Edward A. Norman, "An Approach to the Arab Question in Palestine," January 1938 memo. It was 23 typed pages long and included references.

64. Edward A. Norman, "First Report on Iraq Scheme," 5 May 1938, A 246/29, CZA. See also, R. V. Vernon to Sir John Shuckburgh (of the Colonial Office), letter, dated 20 December 1937, PRO, CO 733/333/75156.

65. Portions of Norman's unpublished diary were made available to Joseph Schechtman, Jabotinsky's biographer. Joseph Schechtman, *Zeev Jabotinsky, Parashat Hayav, 1935–1940* [Rebel and Statesman—The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story] Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Karni Publishing House, 1959), p. 77. This reference by Schechtman is often quoted by Zionist historians in defense of the argument that Jabotinsky was merely in favor of "voluntary" transfer [Joseph Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1961), p. 326; Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin"]. Jabotinsky himself widely publicized this tactical position in formulating his own plan in 1940 [Z. Jabotinsky, *Hazit Hamilhamah Shil 'Am Yisrael* (The Frontline of the People of Israel) (Jerusalem: 1941), chapter 18, pp. 186–89; "The Arab Problem—Without Drama," in Yosef Nedava (ed.), *Zeev Jabotinsky: Haish Vemishnato* [Zeev Jabotinsky: The Man and his Writings] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Press, 1980), pp. 242–45]. He cited the Royal Commission "courageous proposal" which had given the Zionists "a higher moral authority by discussing with equanimity" the removal of "350,000 from one corner of the land of Israel" as a justification for considering "the possibility of about 900,000 [Arabs] leaving the country." Jabotinsky's supposed advocacy of "voluntary" evacuation, however, was inconsistent with the above reference to the "Iron Wall" doctrine, according to which the demographic and political realities of Palestine could only be transformed by force of Zionist "bayonets."

66. Edward A. Norman, "Second Report on Iraq Scheme," 15 May 1939. The report begins with the note that "This is a highly confidential paper...to be submitted to very few persons."

67. Norman, "First Report on Iraq Scheme," 5 May 1938.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Norman, "Second Report on Iraq Scheme," 15 May 1939.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 24 November 1938.

73. Norman, “Second Report on Iraq Scheme,” 15 May 1939.

74. See Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine* , pp. 79–80.

75. Norman, “Second Report on Iraq Scheme,” 15 May 1939.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Letter to Solomon Goldman of Chicago, 28 April 1939, in *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XIX, Series A, Letter no. 52. It was not coincidental that another American Zionist leader and associate of Weizmann, Emanuel Neumann (who had headed the Jewish Agency Economic Department) published an article in the Yishuv daily newspaper *Haboker* , on 8 February 1939—and two days later in the English-language *Palestine Review* (Jerusalem)—proposing that “the masses of Palestinian Arabs be transferred peaceably and in orderly fashion to Iraq and the Iraqian [*sic*] Jews to Palestine.” Cited in Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine* , pp. 81–82.

79. *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XIX, Series A, Letter no. 93, dated 12 June 1939, p. 113.

80. Memo by Edward A. Norman, “Implications in the Possibility of the Development of Iraq,” 23 March 1942, A 246/29, CZA; Nedava, “Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin,” p. 160; Edward Norman, “Supplementary Memorandum on the Iraq Scheme, 1942,” A 246/29, CZA.

81. Ibid. W.C. Lowdermilk, *Palestine, Land of Promise* (London: Victor Collancz, 1944), pp. 127–128. In 1950 Lowdermilk visited Israel at the invitation of its Ministry of Agriculture and that October he began a year’s service as special advisor on soil conservation to the government of Israel.

82. Note dated 6 February 1941, PRO, CO 753/444/75906.

83. Memorandum dated 26 February 1941, in CO 733/444/75906. Two years later, in April 1943, a Christian Palestinian Arab named Francis Kettaneh submitted a memorandum to the British foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, in which he protested that Norman had "widely distributed a memorandum in which he urges that the United Nations forcibly expatriate and transplant all Arabs, whether Muslim or Christian, out of Palestine and settle them in Iraq. This action is urged so as to make place immediately for one million Jews who could immediately immigrate into the country." PRO, FO 371/35034, E 2686/87/31.

84. Letter dated 4 October 1945, A 246/29, CZA.

85. Norman's letter to William D. Hassett, Secretary to the President, 1 November 1945, A 246/29, CZA.

86. A letter from Joseph B. Schechtman, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, New York, to Ezra Danin, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel Aviv, 4 December 1948, A 246/29, CZA.

87. See the *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. II, Series B, Paper 42, pp. 371–72.

88. Ibid.

89. Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini* , Vol. 4, p. 375.

90. Ibid.

91. For Philby's account, see *Arabian Jubilee* (London: 1952), pp. 212–13.

92. *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Discussions with U.S. Zionist leaders, Vol. II, Series B, p. 429.

93. See "The Namier-Baffy Scheme," 13 November 1939, A 312/27, CZA.

94. Letter dated 3 March 1940, in *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. XIX, Series A, p. 242.

95. *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* , Vol. II, p. 509, and Vol. XXI, pp. 60, 109.

96. Cited in Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After: Memoirs 1945–60* (London: Frederick Muller, 1962), pp. 145–6.

97. Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931–1945* (London: Frederick Muller, 1957), p. 426; Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine* , pp. 186–9.

98. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting in Jerusalem, 7 May 1944, CZA. The same reservations were expressed by Shertok at a meeting of the Mapai Central Committee on the following day. See Protocols of the Mapai Central Committee, 8 May 1944, 23/44, CZA.

99. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 7 May 1944.

100. Document referring to the Jewish Agency Executive meeting, no. 5100436, p. 10335, CZA.

101. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 7 May 1944.

102. Protocols of the Jewish Agency Executive's meeting, Jerusalem, 16 December 1944, CZA.

103. Published in New York by W.W. Norton & Company, 1943. In the same year a London-based German Zionist jurist named Ernst Frankenstein published a book entitled *Justice for My People* (London: Nicholson & Watson), in which he repeated the Zionist claim that there had been "a substantial illegal immigration of Arabs" into Palestine and Transjordan. He demanded that a large number of the Palestinians and Transjordanians "be gradually repatriated" to neighboring Arab countries or transferred to Iraq (pp. 159–60).

104. Ben-Horin, *Crossroads of History* , pp. 224–25.

105. Ibid., pp. 230–31.

106. Ibid., pp. 232–34.

107. Ibid.

108. Ibid., pp. 231, 234, 237; Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine* , p. 79.

109. Ben-Horin's file, A 300/54, CZA.

110. Ibid., *The World-Telegram* , (New York), 19 November 1945; Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufai Ochlosin," pp. 163–64.

111. *The Evening Star* , (Washington), 13 December 1945.

112. Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin," p. 164.

113. Quoted in a confidential study for a transfer plan by Joseph Schechtman, p. 139, in Weitz's papers, the Institute for Settlement Research, Rehovot. See also Elish'a Friedman's letter to the editor, *New York Times* , 16 December 1945.

114. Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin," pp. 163–64.

115. Ben-Horin's file, A 300/54, CZA.

116. Nedava, "Tochniyot Helufei Ochlosin," p. 164.

117. Ibid.

118. Ben-Horin's file, A 300/54, CZA.

CHAPTER FIVE

The 1948 Exodus

The Zionist dream of de-Arabizing the country and realizing a clear Jewish majority finally came about during the 1948 war, when 750,000 Palestinians, or more than 80 percent of the Arab inhabitants of what became Israel, took up the road of exile. Commenting on the exodus, Chaim Weizmann, by that time the first president of the State of Israel, proclaimed the Arab evacuation to have been "a miraculous clearing of the land: the miraculous simplication of Israel's task." It was, in fact, less of a miracle than it was the culmination of over a half century of effort, plans, and (in the end) brute force.

The events that led to the Palestinian exodus began on 29 November 1947, when the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 191 endorsing the partition of Palestine into two states, Palestinian Arab and Jewish, with Jerusalem and Bethlehem constituting an international zone. Under the boundaries set out by the partition resolution, about 42 percent of the population of the Jewish state would be Arab. This was a major preoccupation of the Yishuv leadership, and one of the principal issues addressed by the Jewish Agency Executive at its meeting in early November in anticipation of the partition vote. In the course of the deliberations, a consensus emerged in favor of denying Israeli citizenship to as many Arabs as possible. As Ben-Gurion explained, the advantage of the Arabs having Arab citizenship was that in the event of hostilities, their legal status would be that of resident aliens, and they therefore "could be expelled" from the Jewish state for potential disloyalty. With Israeli citizenship, on the other hand, "it would only be possible to imprison them, and it would be better to expel them than to imprison them." [1]

Ben-Gurion raised this issue again the following month in his address to the Central Committee of the Histadrut on 30 December 1947. Echoing the argument frequently put forward in the partition/transfer debates of the 1930s, he stated:

> In the area allocated to the Jewish state there are not more than 520,000 Jews and about 350,000 non-Jews, mostly Arabs. Together with the Jews of Jerusalem, the total population of the Jewish state at the time of its establishment, will be about a million, including almost

> 40 percent non-Jews. Such a [population] composition does not provide a stable basis for a Jewish state. This [demographic] fact must be viewed in all its clarity and acuteness. With such a [population] composition, there cannot even be absolute certainty that control will remain in the hands of the Jewish majority.... There can be no stable and strong Jewish state so long as it has a Jewish majority of only 60 percent.

This, Ben-Gurion added, made necessary the adoption of "a new approach...new habits of mind to suit our new future. We must think like a state." [2] (Eleven years earlier, at a Jewish Agency Executive meeting in October 1936, he had observed that the Yishuv, because it was not a state, was unable to follow the example of Turkey's "transfer" of the Greeks after its military victory.)

Within weeks of the UN partition resolution, the country was plunged in what soon became a full-scale civil war. By mid-December, "spontaneous and unorganized" Palestinian outbreaks of violence were being met by the full weight of the Yishuv's armed forces, the Haganah, in what the British high commissioner called "indiscriminate action against the Arabs" [3] coupled with measures aimed at economic strangulation. Ben-Gurion advised on 19 December that "we adopt the system of aggressive defense; with every Arab attack we must respond with a decisive blow: the destruction of the place or the expulsion of the residents along with the seizure of the place." [4] On 30 December, a British intelligence observer reported that the Haganah was moving fast to exploit Palestinian weaknesses and disorganization, especially in Haifa and Jaffa, and to render them "completely powerless" so as to force them into flight. [5]

The Palestinians were completely unprepared for war, their leadership still in disarray and largely unarmed as a result of the 1936–39 rebellion. The Yishuv's defense force, the Haganah, (to say nothing of the dissident Irgun Tzvai Leumi and Lehi groups), was fully armed and on the offensive. As early as February 1945, before World War II had even ended, the first of a series of master military plans adopted by the Haganah (which in turn was under the jurisdiction of the Jewish Agency) was in place in anticipation of the war for statehood. Thus, Plans A, B, and C (Plan Gimel, also known as

Tochnit May or Plan May) had followed in succession. Plan May, adopted in May 1946 and in effect at the time of the partition vote, provided, inter alia, for the destruction of Arab transport in Palestine; attacks on clubs, cafes, communications centers, water plants and other "vital economic installations" in response to Arab action, and the blowing up of houses used by alleged Arab assailants and the expulsion of their inhabitants. [6] Already in December the Haganah National Command was pushing for the adoption of "an aggressive defense strategy" that went beyond Plan May. Within a few months, the new plan was in place— *Tochnit Dalet* , or Plan D.

Although adopted by the Haganah High Command on 10 March 1948, the plan had first been envisaged several years earlier. According to the Haganah OC Operations, Yigael Yadin: "I prepared the nucleus of Plan Dalet in 1944 when I was head of planning in the underground, and I worked on it further in the summer of [19]47 when the [Haganah] Chief of Staff, [Yaacov Dori], fell ill. The plan was to take control of the key points in the country and on the roads before the British left." [7]

The politico-strategic tenets of the plan provided for the enlargement of the Jewish state beyond the partition boundaries. According to *Sefer Toldot Ha-Haganah* , the official history of the Haganah, villages inside the Jewish state that resisted "should be destroyed...and their inhabitants expelled beyond the borders of the Jewish state." Meanwhile, "Palestinian residents of urban quarters which dominate access to or egress from the towns should be expelled beyond the borders of the Jewish state in the event of their resistance." [8] The plan also contained detailed provisions for the conquest of Arab towns and "the expulsion of the population" of those neighborhoods sitting astride traffic routes: "occupation and control of all isolated Arab neighborhoods...especially those neighborhoods which control the city's exit and entry roads....In case of resistance, the population will be expelled to the area of the Arab municpal center." Another clause of the plan provided for the "encirclement of the central Arab municipal area and its isolation from external transportation routes, as well as the termination of its vital services (water, electricity, fuel, etc.), as far as possible." [9] The Haganah intelligence service compiled a list of Arab villages and towns, containing information about their leaders and notables, to help implement the plan. In particular, the plan specified a number of towns outside the

boundaries set by the UN (including Qalqiliya, Tulkarm, Acre, Nazareth, Lydda, and Ramle) that should be occupied. It was according to the basic guidelines of this plan that section after section of the country was conquered by the Yishuv forces and tens of thousands of Arabs were expelled outright or driven to flee. Although the plan was not a blueprint for the expulsion of the Arabs, it was anchored in the politico-ideological concept of transfer and provided the operative policy in the field; the plan's specific provisions were interpreted and acted upon by Haganah commanders who were fully aware of the politico-demographic objectives of Ben-Gurion, whose imprint the plan bore. According to Ben-Gurion's admiring biographer Michael Bar-Zohar, "In internal discussions, in instructions, to his men, the Old Man [Ben-Gurion] demonstrated a clear position: It would be better that as few a number as possible of Arabs would remain in the territory of the [Jewish] state." [10]

The unfolding of the war is beyond the scope of this study. Others have catalogued with meticulous detail the military strategy, the successive campaigns, and the various factors precipitating the exodus of Palestinian refugees. Note has been made of the failure of various Haganah commanders, in their attacks and evacuation orders, to distinguish between "hostile" Arab villages and those that had concluded "nonaggression" pacts with the Yishuv; the role of attacks on civilian targets in the months prior to and in the early phases of the war; [11] the role of atrocities (such as Dayr Yasin) and their seemingly judicious timing and placement so as to maximize their impact; and the impact of various forms of psychological warfare.

By 1 June 1948, approximately 370,000 Palestinians had fled from their homes; this number were double by the end of the war. The reasons for this mass exodus were categorized by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Intelligence Branch as follows: Haganah/IDF operations ("at least 55 percent"); operations by IZL and Lehi (15 percent); the whispering campaigns psychological warfare, evacuation ordered by IDF, and general fear (14 percent). [12] Meir Pa'il, Israeli historian of the Haganah and the 1948 war, estimates that, of the total refugee exodus, "one third fled out of fear, one third were forcibly evacuated by the Israelis... [and] one third were encouraged by the Israelis to flee." [13] In his important work *The Birth of the*

Palestinian Refugee Problem , the Israeli historian Benny Morris gives six major reasons for the abandonment of some 369 Arab villages: “expulsion by Jewish forces,” “abandonment on Arab orders,” “fear of Jewish attack” “military assault on the settlement by Jewish troops,” “whispering campaigns (i.e., psychological warfare...)” and “influence of fall of, or exodus from, neighbouring town.” [14] Morris describes the many individual expulsion orders from Haganah commanders concerning various villages, including those with nonagression pacts with the Yishuv, as well as the gratuitous (from a military standpoint) nature of some of the expulsion orders. But what he and Pa’il and other Israeli historians fail to acknowledge is the pattern of these attacks and orders; they contend that the expulsion of the Arabs and the destruction of their villages were governed by strategic military considerations rather than any premeditated plan or design. [15] And while it is true that military history is full of scorched earth tactics and expulsions to clear the theater of war, it is difficult—in light of the systematic nature of the “clearing out” operations and the sheer magnitude of the exodus (not to mention the careful efforts to prevent the return of the refugees)—not to see a policy at work.

Even as the war was under way, as operation followed operation and as the numbers of refugees continued to swell, discussions relating to permanent demographic changes and to the permanent acquisition of land were proceeding with no reference to the exigencies of war.

Thus, on 6 February 1948, at a time when the vast majority of the population was still in place and when the major operations of the war were yet to come, Ben-Gurion told the Mapai Party Council that “without populating the Jerusalem mountains and the hills [surrounding] the coastal plains...I am doubtful whether we would be able to maintain the link with Jerusalem,” and therefore that “it is necessary to be in [to settle] the mountains.” In response to a remark from a member of the audience that “We have no land there” [in the hills and mountains], Ben-Gurion replied:

> The war will give us the land. The concepts of “ours” and “not ours” are peace concepts, only, and in war they lose their whole meaning. [16]

Addressing the Mapai Council the following day, Ben-Gurion declared his profound satisfaction at the newly achieved Judaization of western parts of Jerusalem:

> From your entry into Jerusalem, through Lifta, Romema... there are no Arabs. One hundred percent Jews. Since Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, it has not been so Jewish as it is now. In many Arab neighborhoods in the west one sees not a single Arab. I do not assume that this will change....What had happened in Jerusalem...is likely to happen in many parts of the country...in the six, eight or ten months of the campaign there will certainly be great changes in the composition of the population in the country. [17]

Two months later, while contemplating the implementation of Plan Dalet, Ben-Gurion envisaged empty Arab villages in the Galilee. Speaking to the Zionist Actions Committee on 6 April, Ben-Gurion declared:

> We will not be able to win the war if we do not, during the war, populate upper and lower, eastern and western Galilee, the Negev and Jerusalem area....I believe that war will also bring in its wake a great change in the distribution of the Arab population. [18]

The intentions of the Yishuv leadership were not difficult to understand. Aharon Cohen, the director during the war of the Arab Department of the newly-formed Mapam Party (The United Workers Party) wrote in a memorandum dated 10 May 1948 to Mapam's Political Committee:

> There is reason to believe that what is being done...is being done out of certain political objectives and not only out of military necessities, as they claim sometimes. In fact, the "transfer" of the Arabs from the boundaries of the Jewish state is being implemented...the evacuation/clearing out of Arab villages is not always done out of military necessity. The complete destruction of villages is not always done only because there are "no sufficient forces to maintain a garrison." [19]

Although denying that the Arab exodus was part of a pre-conceived Zionist plan, Cohen later insisted that "the flight of Arab masses was in part due to

the official Jewish policy....once [the flight] started it received encouragement from the most crucial Jewish elements, for military and political reasons." Cohen concluded that the exigencies of war could not in themselves account for the levelling of villages. [20]

While Ben-Gurion contemplated the prospect of "great changes" in the composition of the population, others anticipated the depopulation of the country. Thus Yosef Weitz, prime mover of the first and second Transfer Committees (1937–42) and the powerful director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Settlement Department, saw in the partition resolution and the coming hostilities the felicitous opportunity to set in motion long-nurtured plans. His diary is replete with injunctions not to "miss the opportunities" offered by the war.

Weitz always had considerable influence by virtue of his crucial position at the head of the JNF's program for land acquisition and distribution among settlements and his consequent access to the entire JNF network spread throughout the country. By the time the war broke out, that influence had greatly increased. He occupied important posts in the national institutions (which remained important after the creation of the Israeli state until the ministries were being set up), serving on the Committee of Directorates as the JNF's representative, on the Settlement Committee, and as a member of the three-man Arab Affairs Committee. According to Benny Morris, "Through 1948 he had ready access to key cabinet ministers...and often, he met with Ben-Gurion....Weitz's connections also encompassed the Yishuv's military brass, especially on the level of district, area and battalion commanders." In short, "Weitz was well-placed to shape and influence decision-making regarding the Arab population on the national level and to oversee the implementation of policy on the local level." [21]

On the day following the vote on the United Nations partition resolution, Weitz wrote in his diary: "The creation of the Hebrew State in part of the country is the beginning of complete redemption." This situation engendered the key question: "How should we solve the question of the Arabs who constitute nearly half of the state population?" [22] A week later he entered in his diary: "I have been working day and night in these days on the calculation of the land size in the Hebrew state.... Indeed, we still need

to redeem much until most of the cultivated land will be our property." [23] Weitz was correct in noting that there remained much to be redeemed: the great bulk of the cultivable land in the Jewish state assigned by the UN was

> not Jewish-owned or even in the category of state domain whose ownership could be automatically assumed by a successor government. Thus, of 13,500,000 dunums (6,000,000 of which were desert and 7,500,000 dunums of cultivable land) in the Jewish state according to the Partition Plan, only 1,500,000 dunums were Jewish owned. [24]

It will be recalled that Weitz had written in 1940 that a complete "redemption" of the land could be achieved only after the total removal of the Arab population from the country. He had advocated removal in stages, and his transfer scheme of December 1937 envisaged that Arab tenant farmers and peasants should be transferred before the townspeople. Thus, almost a decade later, Weitz turned his attention to the Arab tenant farmers and villagers in the Haifa district and the Beisan Valley, where, indeed, operations were either already underway or soon to be launched.

Weitz arrived in Haifa on 10 January 1948 and met with his colleagues from the JNF's northern district office on 10–11 January to discuss the situation of Bilad al-Ruhah's villagers and tenant farmers in the hilly region to the southeast of Haifa, overwhelmingly populated by Arab peasants. Also on the agenda was the question of "development legislation"—a formula that had been proposed at the Jewish Agency Executive meetings of June 1938 involving agrarian laws to ensure land expropriation and citizenship restrictions designed to encourage voluntary transfer. After these meetings, Weitz wrote: "Was not now the time to get rid [of the Arab peasants]? Why should we have in our midst these thorns...? Our men are considering...the matter." [25]

On the following day Weitz proceeded to Yoqne'am where he conferred with Yehuda Burstein, a Haganah intelligence officer, to discuss "the question of the evacuation of tenant farmers from Yoqne'am and Daliya [Daliyat al-Ruhah] with the means acceptable today. The matter has been handled by the defense [Haganah] people and in the afternoon I discussed [the matter] with the district deputy commander." [26] Four weeks later, the

tenant farmers of Daliyat al-Ruhah, Qira wa Qamon and Yoqne'am were driven out. [27]

On 13 January 1948, Weitz talked to his Haifa JNF colleagues on taking measures to evacuate the lands of Wadi Qubani; "I gave instructions not to miss the opportunities in this turbulent hour." [28]

Jewish National Fund officials and local Haganah commanders also focused on clearing out the Arab peasant communities of the Beisan Valley. (According to the plan Weitz had submitted to the first Transfer Committee in December 1937, the Arabs were to be removed from this region to Transjordan.) On 20 February 1948, Weitz reviewed the general situation with the Haifa JNF staff and observed a certain movement among the valley's semi-nomadic Arab communities towards Transjordan. "Maybe now is the hour to implement our original plan and to transfer them there; our people are working in this direction." [29] Nine days later Weitz took up the matter with Moshe (Musa) Goldenberg, the local Haganah commander. [30] (Weitz had visited the Esdraelon and Beisan valleys in the company of Goldenberg back in March 1941, and had written in his diary at the time that population transfer was the only solution: "This idea does not leave me.")

On 26 March 1948 Weitz, Avraham Hartzfeld (a participant in the transfer debates of 1937–38), Goldenberg, and Shmuel of Kibbutz Maoz met in Haifa and resolved that "the [Jewish] settlements in the Beit Shean [Valley] would start to take over the [Arab] lands and cultivate them...our activities must be directed towards the evacuation [of the Arabs] from the entire Beit Shean Valley apart from the [Arab] town [of Beisan]. Now is the hour." [31] The expulsion of the villages of Qumiyah and al-Tirah in the Esdraelon plain was discussed at the same meeting. [32] A month later, Goldenberg and Elisha', the adjutant to the Beisan district Haganah commander, met Weitz and explained that the Bedouin were beginning to return to the valley and that King Abdallah of Transjordan was pressing them to go back. Weitz urged the two officers: "We must exercise counter-pressure so that also those remaining in the valley will leave it." [33]

During the spring of 1948 the Beisan Valley was completely cleared of its Arab population. In accordance with Plan Dalet, the wholly Arab town of Beisan was conquered by the Haganah on 12 May; its inhabitants were intimidated into flight or expelled across the Jordan River to Transjordan. [34]

Meanwhile, Weitz was at work trying to revive the transfer committee so that it would coordinate transfer operations. On the eve of Plan Dalet's implementation, in March 1948, the Haganah had set up the "Committee for Abandoned Arab Property" (CFAAP). Composed of senior "Arab affairs experts" (Haganah intelligence officers and JNF land-purchasing agents), the committee was to be entrusted with the disposal of all Arab possessions falling into Yishuv hands. The creation of such a committee at this stage in the war in itself raises the issue of "prior intent." From the start of the hostilities, Weitz had been urging the Haganah local and national commanders to implement the transfer plans of the late 1930s. On 31 March, Weitz met in Tel Aviv with the head of the Haganah, Yisrael Galili, to whom he "presented...the question of the evacuation/removal of the Arabs from our boundaries which has begun in various places of itself. I [Weitz] demanded that [a policy] line be set and the appointment of a committee to act." Galili, Weitz wrote, "found the idea good" and said that he would discuss it with the members of the existing Committee For Abandoned Arab Property." [35] That evening Weitz himself met with members of the CFAAP—'Ezra Danin, Gad and Moshe Machnes, and Yoav Zuckerman—and suggested that the Yishuv should "help in creating conditions that will bring about [Arab] evacuation." He mentioned the figure of 25,000 Arabs to be removed from certain (presumably rural) localities. 'Ezra Danin supported Weitz's proposal; the others took no clear stand and suggested that the proposal be addressed to those in authority. [36] In fact, the "real decision-makers" were Ben-Gurion and the Haganah leaders. [37]

Weitz met briefly with Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv on 4 April and asked for an audience to discuss the "question of evacuating/clearing out the Arabs." [38] Ten days later, Weitz again met with three members of the CFAAP—Danin, Gad Machness and Yitzhak Gvirtz—who were also Haganah intelligence officers. Once again Weitz expressed dissatisfaction with the limited authority of their committee, which "must direct our war towards the

removal of as many Arabs as possible from the boundaries of our state. The guarding of their property after their removal is a secondary question," Weitz recorded. "Finally it was agreed that I would submit a proposal for [Arab] removal from localities based on my considerations". [39]

Four days later, Weitz presented his transfer plan to the committee. Judging by the speed with which it had been prepared, it is likely that it was based on lists of Arab villages drawn for the transfer schemes of the late 1930s. He recorded on 18 April:

> I made a summary of a list of the Arab villages which in my opinion must be cleared out in order to complete Jewish regions. I also made a summary of the places that have land disputes and must be settled by military means. [40]

On the evening of 28 April, Weitz met again with the members of the CFAAP and recorded "Khayriyah and Saqiyah [two Arab villages in the coastal plain] have also been cleared out. My plan is getting implemented." [41] Soon afterwards, Weitz met Mishael Shaham, the Haganah officer in charge of setting up new "Conquest Settlements," designed to prevent the return of evacuated Arabs to their lands and village sites. They discussed the idea of extending the border of the Jewish state to include the Ramle and Lydda districts up to Bab al-Wad (Latrun) and beyond. "If we can conquer the [Arab] settlements whose lands belong to effendis and monasteries, we will pay them only the price of land and we will set up our settlements—we will establish real facts." [42] "I am gripped by the idea of 'Conquest Settlements' on a countrywide scale. I see in it the essence of our war," Weitz wrote. [43] On 4 May, before the Haganah conquest of the town of Beisan, a delegation from the Jewish settlements in the Esdraelon and Beisan valleys conferred with Weitz in Tel Aviv. The Beisan Valley representatives urged Weitz to influence the High Command to attack Beisan rather than to place it under siege after the Arab Legion had entered it. Weitz entered in his diary: "The Beit Shean [Beisan] Valley is the gate for our state in the Galilee....I told them that its clearing [of Arabs] is the need of the hour." [44]

Weitz's efforts to systematize transfer through the formation of a central body were boosted in May when Ezra Danin resigned from the CFAAP, claiming that it was a cover for "individual acts of robbery" and basically an insignificant sideshow. In a letter to Weitz, Danin wrote that he favored Weitz's proposal for

> an institution whose role will be...to seek ways to carry out the transfer of the Arab population at this opportunity when it has left its normal place of residence....Let us not waste the fact that a large Arab population has moved from its home, and achieving such a thing again would be very difficult in normal times.

Danin also suggested that "Christian interests" might be persuaded to assist in settling the displaced Palestinians in neighboring Arab countries permanently. [45]

On 28 May, two weeks after Israel's declaration of statehood, Weitz met Moshe Shertok, the newly appointed foreign minister who had played an important role in both the first and second Transfer Committees. Weitz asked whether "action should be taken to turn the flight of the Arabs from the country and blocking their return into an established fact." If so, he proposed to entrust two or three persons "to deal with this according to a premeditated plan." He also suggested that "a three-person committee" composed of 'Ezra Danin, Eliahu Sasson ("who had dealt with Arab affairs on behalf of the Yishuv's institutions"), and himself, be appointed to "work out a plan of action directed [at achieving] the transfer goal." Sasson, the newly appointed head of the Middle East Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry, had been involved in the previous transfer committees, and, like Weitz, had been a proponent of the transfer scheme to Syria in the early 1940s. Shertok "congratulated" Weitz on his "initiative" and declared that he, too, believed that this "phenomenon must be exploited and turned into an established fact." According to Weitz, Shertok said he would consult Ben-Gurion and [Eli'ezer] Kaplan, the finance minister. Shertok also backed the proposal of buying land from "departing Arabs, which would achieve double aim: land-purchase and population transfer." [46]

Two days later, Weitz, Danin, and Sasson met and drew up general outlines for the committee. Weitz noted in his diary:

> From now on, I shall call it the Transfer Committee. It seems that Shertok took measures approving the appointment of this committee the day before yesterday [on 28 May] in talks with his secretaries. In the evening I discussed this question with Kaplan and he also thinks that the transfer fact should be consolidated and the departing [Arabs] not be allowed to return. [47]

It should be recalled that it was Shertok, as the head of the Jewish Agency Political Department, who had appointed the first and second Transfer Committees and it is most unlikely that Sasson, Shertok's subordinate in the Foreign Ministry, would have joined the third Transfer Committee without his boss's approval. Weitz discussed the transfer matter with Gad Machnes and Minority Affairs Minister Bechor Shitrit, both of whom offered their support. [48] On 1 June, senior cabinet ministers and officials, including Shertok, Shitrit, and Cabinet Secretary Zeev Sharef, met in Tel Aviv and resolved that the Arabs must not be allowed back and that the IDF commanders "were to be issued with orders in that matter." [49]

On 5 June Weitz met Ben-Gurion, now prime minister, in Tel Aviv and gave to him the Transfer Committee's "Scheme for the Solution of the Arab Problem in the State of Israel," contined in a three-page memorandum signed by Weitz, Danin, and Sasson. The memorandum, entitled "Retrospective Transfer," called for preventing Arabs from returning to their homes; destroying Arab villages during military operations; preventing cultivation (and harvesting) of Arab lands; settling Jews in Arab towns and villages; instituting legislation barring the return of the refugees; launching a propaganda campaign designed to discourage the return of refugees; and campaigning for the resettlement of the refugees in other places. [50]

According to Weitz, Ben-Gurion "agreed to the whole [transfer policy] line," but said that top priority should be given to the first section of the scheme, that is, to the practical measures taken within the country; only later should negotiations with neighboring Arab countries for the absorption

of refugees be explored. He also saw the existing committee as “provisional” and planned to hold a “limited” meeting which would appoint a supervisory committee to deal with the matter. [51]

In the following days consultations were conducted between Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Kaplan, and Levi Shkolnik [Eshkol], the deputy defense minister, on a prospective supervisory transfer committee to be composed of representatives of the JNF (Weitz), the Jewish Agency Settlement Department, and the defense establishment. [52] No formal action was yet taken, however, and when Shertok appointed Ezra Danin as a permanent advisor to the Foreign Ministry’s Middle East Department on 16 July, he added that Danin would act as well as “a representative of the Foreign Ministry in the [prospective] body which was to deal with the problem of the transfer of Arabs outside the boundaries of Israel and their permanent resettlement in neighboring countries.” [53]

Nonetheless, although official cabinet approval had not yet been given, the committee continued functioning, supervising the systematic destruction of villages in various sections as part of a policy designed to further Arab exodus and block refugee return. The actual destruction was a joint effort of the army and Jewish settlements. Morris writes:

> At this stage [early June] Weitz was not to be deterred by the lack of a formal, written permit for his [Transfer Committee’s] activities...[He talked] with Danin about how to go about destroying the abandoned villages—where would the money come from, the tractors, the dynamite, the manpower? And where was it best to begin?....With most able-bodied men in the Yishuv conscripted into the IDF, with most equipment, such as tractors and tracked caterpillars, in use by the army or in agriculture, and with dynamite in perenially short supply, Weitz had a job of it organizing what amounted to an enormous project of destruction....
>
> But there is no doubt that Ben-Gurion agreed to Weitz’s scheme. Finance Minister Eliezer Kaplan said as much to Weitz when they met on 8 June, adding his own endorsement of the plan....On 13 June, Weitz travelled north to the Beit Shean and Jezreel valleys, where he

> saw “our people...reaping in the fields of [the Arab village of] Zarin,” [Weitz recorded]. In Kibbutz Beit Hashita, Weitz met Goldenberg, David Baum from Kfar Yehezkeel, and the commander of the IDF’s (Golani Brigade) battalion in the Jezreel, Avraham Yoffe. “From the start of our talk,” Weitz recorded, “it became clear that there is agreement among us on the question of the abandoned villages: destruction, renovation and settlement [by Jews]”.... [54]

In the following days, Weitz received progress reports on the destruction of various villages, and on 16 June “probably on the basis of a progress report from Weitz,” Ben-Gurion summarized the list of Arab villages destroyed. Weitz, watching the destruction of one of the villages himself, noted in his diary: “I was surprised nothing moved in me at the sight....No regret and no hatred, as this is the way of the world...” [55] The distribution of Arab lands among Jewish settlements, the establishment of new settlements on village sites, and the settling of Jewish immigrants in Arab houses in the towns were all part of the same process of establishing an irreversible *fait accompli.*

Some debate on the issue of transfer took place in the wake of the wholesale expulsion of some 50,000 civilians, including old men, women, and children, from the towns of Lydda and Ramle by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) during the second week of July 1948. In this instance, the expulsion orders had come from Ben-Gurion himself, who had responded to Chief of Operations Yigal Allon’s query “What shall we do with the Arabs?” with a dismissive gesture and the words “expell them.” [56] However, the brutal nature of the expulsion—a large number of refugees died of exhaustion and exposure on the forced march eastward—was shocking to many. And in the ensuing debates it is clear that in some circles, at least, there was little question that what had happened was hardly a mere contingency of war.

In a cabinet meeting on 16 July, only a few days after the events, Agriculture Minister Aharon Zisling (who at the 1937 Ihud Po’alei Tzion World Convention had supported the concept of “voluntary” Arab transfer in principle, but expressed reservations concerning mass expulsion on pragmatic grounds), cautioned:

> We are embarking on a course that will most greatly endanger any hope of a peaceful alliance with forces who could be our allies in the Middle East....Hundreds of thousands of Arabs who will be evicted from Palestine, even if they are to blame, and left hanging in midair, will grow to hate us....If you do things in the heat of the war, in the midst of the battle, it's one thing. But if, after a month, you do it in cold blood, for political reasons, in public, that is something altogether different. [57]

Ben-Gurion dismissed the comment by accusing Mapam leaders of hypocrisy, and reminding them that their leading kibbutz, Mishmar Ha'emek, had been involved in expelling the Arab villages of Bilad al-Ruhah in April. [58]

Crucial documents pertaining to the 16 July Cabinet meeting are still classified. But there is enough information to indicate the link in Ben-Gurion's mind between transfer and war. It was at that time that Ben-Gurion stated that he "was not surprised" at the Arab exodus and that "we should prevent Arab return at any cost." [59] He also cited once again the Turkish-Greek "example" in which the Turks "expelled the Greeks from Anatolia." [60] (It will be recalled that in the transfer section of his "Lines for Zionist Policy" of October 1941, he had explained that the "transfer" had actually been a euphemism for expulsion in the wake of the crushing Turkish military victory.)

A week later, on 24 July, the Mapai Center held a full-scale debate regarding the Arab population question against the background of the Ramle-Lydda expulsions. The majority apparently backed Ben-Gurion's policies. Shlomo Lavi, who had already voiced his support for transfer at the Ihud Po'alei Tzion Convention in 1937, said that "the...transfer of Arabs out of the country in my eyes is one of the most just, moral and correct things that can be done. I have thought this for many years." [61] This was seconded by Avraham Katznelson, another influential Mapai leader, who opined that there was nothing "more moral, from the viewpoint of universal human ethics, than the emptying of the Jewish state of the Arabs and their transfer elsewhere....This requires [the use of] force." [62] A few voices were

critical of the Yishuv and Mapai leadership, such as Secretary General of the Histadrut Yosef Sprintzak, who stated:

> There is a feeling that faits accomplis are being created....The question is not whether the Arabs will return or not return. The question is whether the Arabs are [being or have been] expelled or not....I want to know, who is creating the facts? And the facts are being created on orders.

He believed that there was "a line of action...of expropriation and of emptying the land of Arabs by force." [63]

On 18 August, during the truce that preceeded the final military onslaughts in northern and central Galilee and southern Palestine, Weitz's "Scheme for the Solution of the Arab Problem in the State of Israel" of 5 June was discussed at a meeting in the prime minister's office. Ben-Gurion, senior ministers and officials, intelligence officers and "Arab affairs experts" participated, including Shertok, Shitrit, Kaplan, David Hacohen, Zalman Lifschitz, Weitz, Ya'acov Shim'oni (director of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East Affairs department), Reuven Shiloah (director of the Foreign Ministry's political division and a military advisor to Ben-Gurion), Yosef Stromza, David Horowitz (director general of the Finance Ministry), General Elimelech Avner (head of the Military Government in the Occupied Territories), and others. [64] The participants unanimously backed the official policy of blocking the evacuees' return, which by now amounted to at least a half million people. Weitz explained that 286 villages had been "evacuated/cleared out" and that about three million dunams of land had been left by the Arabs. He urged that an official body be appointed to lobby for the resettlement of the evacuees in neighboring countries permanently and to prepare "a plan for the transfer of the Arabs and their resettlement [abroad]." [65] Ben-Gurion talked about the machinery to be instituted for confiscating the abandoned Arab property and the need to collect material and to study the means for the absorption of the refugees in Arab countries. Minority Affairs Minister Shitrit spoke about the "exchange" of Oriental Jews with "Israeli Arabs." David Hacohen maintained that only the government, and not a private body, could deal with the issue of resettling the Arabs in neighboring countries. [66]

Later that same day, Shertok wrote to Weizmann, now the president of the provisional council of the State of Israel, explaining the government's determination to block the Arab evacuees' return:

> As for the future, we are equally determined...to explore all possibilities of getting rid, once and for all, of the huge Arab minority which originally threatened us. What can be achieved in this period of storm and stress will be quite unattainable once conditions get stabilized. A group of people from among our senior officers [i.e., the Transfer Committee] has already started working on the study of resettlement possibilities [for the refugees] in other lands....What such permanent resettlement of Israeli's Arabs in the neighbouring territories will mean in terms of making land available in Israel for the settlement of our own people requires no emphasis. [67]

A week later the provisional committee was upgraded to an official government body when Ben-Gurion's cabinet formally approved the appointment of a three-person Transfer Committee, composed of Weitz and Danin (from the provisional committee) and Zalman Lifschitz, [68] who had been involved in the first and second Transfer Committees. The cabinet secretariat informed Weitz, in a letter dated 29 August, that the "Committee...must submit to him a proposal about the possibilities of settling the Arabs of the Land of Israel in the Arab states." [69] Ben-Gurion apparently referred to this body as "The Committee for Removal and Expulsion" (*Va'adat 'Akirah* —literally "uprooting"— *Vegerush*), though the editors of his *War Diary* translated the name more euphemistically to read the "Committee for Evacuation and Repopulation." [70] In the efforts to create Arab-free regions, the Transfer Committee assisted and advised the prime minister, local and senior army commanders, and representatives of Jewish settlement blocs. These efforts were facilitated by the introduction in all areas conquered by the army of military rule based on the British Mandatory Emergency Regulations.

Many evacuees had not actually left Palestine, but had merely sought refuge in safer Arab areas in the country; by the middle of the war, some had begun moving back to their villages and towns in what the Israeli government had begun to term "infiltration." On 13 September 1948,

Lifschitz informed Ben-Gurion that only a minority of the evacuees (mostly townspeople) had moved to neighboring states—75,000 to Transjordan, 5,000 to Iraq, 12,000–15,000 to Lebanon, 20,000 to Syria, and a few to Egypt. The *fellahin* "were encamping along the front lines and hoping to return." Lifschitz recommended that these peasants should be "harassed/intimidated" into moving out of Palestine. [71]

In a meeting with Ben-Gurion two weeks later, Weitz explained that thousands of Arab refugees had concentrated in central Galilee—what Moshe Carmel, the Northern Front Commander, termed "the Galilee enclave" of 60,000 refugees and local residents. [72] He recommended that these Arabs should be "intimidated without end" and asked Ben-Gurion to issue orders through his military adviser, Reuven Shiloah, to drive the Arabs into Syria and Lebanon. The Transfer Committee, Weitz and Ben-Gurion agreed, would assist Shiloh in this intimidation campaign. [73] It is evident that the IDF expulsions in October–November 1948 from some of the newly conquered areas in central and northern Galilee—"the Galilee enclave"—and from southern Palestine was influenced by the advice and lobbying activities of the Transfer Committee members. [74]

The Transfer Committee submitted its recommendations to Ben-Gurion on 26 October 1948 reaffirming the government's policy of blocking the return of the refugees and calling for their resettlement in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Transjordan. It also called for the evacuation of the Iraqi and Syrian Jews to Israel. [75] Ben-Gurion apparently endorsed these recommendations, but proposed concentrating the Arab evacuees in a single country, preferably Iraq, as he had suggested in his December 1938 memorandum to the Zionist Actions Committee. He opposed their resettlement in Transjordan. [76]

By the time the Transfer Committee submitted its formal recommendations, the vast majority of the Arab refugees had already been driven out and the refugee return had already been blocked. The significance of the committee lies, above and beyond its earlier impact on government policies and IDF conduct, more in what it shows about the Zionist mindset; indeed, the fact that such a committee should be created at all is significant.

Israeli historians have discussed the activities of the third Transfer Committee throughout the second part of 1948 largely in the context of "retrospective transfer"—the notion that while there was no official policy promoting transfer, the government seized upon the unexpected opportunity offered by the spontaneous exodus to block the refugees' return. [77] In this respect, a memorandum written by the Transfer Committee members at the same time as it submitted its final recommendations to Ben-Gurion is worth quoting. It states, in part:

> The exodus of the Arabs beyond the boundaries of the state of Israel was not from the start an impossible occurrence and its occurence is not among the surprises that have never been predicted....On the contrary, much had been said about such a possibility, which has come out of planned considerations, in recent years, as a solution to the problem of the whole Land of Israel. [78]

It is further interesting to note the more recent plans mentioned by the Transfer Committee's memorandum: the "great American expert on soil preservation, Walter Lowdermilk," who suggested in 1938 that the Arabs of the Land of Israel move out and settle in Iraq, the Hoover plan of 1945, and the British Labor party's resolution of May 1945 calling for "the transfer of the Arab population from that part of the country, which would be allocated to the Jewish state." [79]

One of the Transfer Committee's initiatives had been to invite Joseph Schechtman, the Zionist Revisionist leader who for three decades had been a close associate of Vladimir Jabotinsky and who had written a book on population transfer in Europe, [80] to join in its efforts. Already in August 1948, at a session of the Zionist Actions Committee, the New York-based Schechtman had been elected as a Revisionist representative on the Executive of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, which for the first time included all Zionist parties. More importantly, sometime around the end of August or early September 1948 he had worked out his own "compulsory" transfer scheme [81] and submitted it in the form of a study to the cabinet secretary, Ze'ev Sharef, and to the Transfer Committee.

Schechtman explained that his study was not merely a descriptive and historical presentation of facts; rather he believed “that many important conclusions for the future can and must be drawn from the experience of past transfer and that the underlying idea of any transfer scheme is basically a preventive one.” If a problem of an ethnic minority cannot be solved within the existing territorial frame, then “timely recourse must be taken to the essentially preventive device of transfer.” According to Schechtman, “the case of Palestine seems to offer a classic case for quick, decisive transfer action as the only constructive possibility of breaking the present deadlock...and that no constructive solution can be arrived at without a large-scale [Arab] transfer.” [82] The only workable solution “is an organized exchange of population between Palestine and the Arab states mainly to Iraq of Palestine Arabs,” and the transfer to Palestine of the Jewish communities in Arab countries. [83]

Schechtman’s scheme called for the “compulsory” transfer of the Palestinians to Iraq and cited in the Ben-Horin plan of 1943 as justification. [84] It observed “unmistakable indications to the effect that the Israeli Government begins earnestly to weigh an Arab-Jewish exchange of population as the most thorough and constructive means of solving the problem of an Arab minority in the Jewish state.” As evidence of transfer discussions in Israeli government circles, he cited remarks by Arthur Lourie, the head of the Israeli United Nations Office and the representative at the Lake Success talks in New York, in an interview that appeared in the *New York Times* on 24 July 1948. [85]

Schechtman maintained that, although it was evident that the Palestine Arab leaders would never agree to any plan of this kind (“which provoked on their part limitless indignation” [86]), “once uprooted, they [the Arabs] would probably be responsive to any plan of their resettlement in Iraq, with full compensation by the state of Israel for their property left behind.” [87] The working of the transfer scheme would be underpinned by an interstate treaty between the governments of Israel and Iraq and possibly other Arab countries. These treaties “would provide a compulsory, but not all-inclusive, ethnic sorting out....As a rule, every Arab in the Jewish State and every Jew in Iraq...would be subject to transfer; no specific option to this effect would be expected or necessary.” [88] For Schechtman, “the equality of

numbers on both sides" of the so-called exchange of population "in this particular case was of no importance whatsoever, since the prospective Palestine Arab transferees in Iraq" would be settled "not on land vacated by the Jewish evacuees," but on land provided by the Iraqi state. As a result, "the amount of land...would be sufficient in Palestine where millions of dunams would be left behind by the departing Arabs." [89]

On 27 October 1948, Schechtman received a cable from Cabinet Secretary Sharef: "Approve your proposal collect material discussed. Danin [and] Lifschitz will refund expenses five hundred dollars." [90] Schechtman's urgent assignment on behalf of the Transfer Committee and the Israeli government included the collection of material and the carrying out of a study on the Palestinians' transfer to Iraq. It was at that time that Committee member Lifschitz had "insisted so much on obtaining [Edward] Norman's [transfer scheme] treasures." [91]

In the event, no transfer "arrangement" with other countries was necessary. Israel's transfer action proved unilateral, and the new state never had to lay out any funds or negotiate any terms: it simply washed its hands entirely of the matter and disclaimed all responsibility. No compensation was forthcoming despite repeated and unanimous UN resolutions, and it was the international community, through the UN, that bore the burden of providing as best it could for the some 750,000 refugees waiting to return.

By the end of 1949, the Arab exodus was virtually complete, except for isolated instances such as the transfer of the 2,700 residents of the Mediterranean town al-Majdal to Gaza, then under Egyptian administration, in June of 1950. According to Benny Morris, "The interdepartmental government Committee for Transferring Arabs already in February 1949 had decided in principle on the need to clear Majdal of Arabs." [92] Soon after, Jewish immigrants began moving into the vacated Arab houses of the town, which had been renamed Ashkelon.

When the war ended Israel was not entirely free of Arabs, but the 140,000–150,000 who had remained [93]—many of them Christians and Druze, and mainly concentrated in the Galilee and what was known as the Little Triangle—were permitted to remain. The borders of the new state had been

pushed through conquest from the 55.5 percent of Mandatory Palestine allotted to the Jews under partition to 77 percent. The bulk of the land had been acquired and was now being tilled by Jewish settlements, and the size of the Arab minority was apparently considered manageable. It is interesting to note that one of the Transfer Committee's final recommendations submitted to Ben-Gurion on 26 October 1948 was that the Arabs should not exceed 15 percent of the population in mixed cities such as Haifa. Transfer Committee member Ezra Danin later wrote that the recommendations stipulated that the Arab minority as a whole should not be more than 20 percent of the total population of Israel. [94] In 1949, the Arab minority constituted about 17 percent of the state. While the new Jewish state may not have been quite as Jewish as England was English, it was close enough to satisfy the new state's leaders—a miraculous simplification indeed.

Notes

1. Protocol of the Jewish Agency Executive's meeting of 2 November 1947, cited in Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 28.

2. David Ben-Gurion, *Yoman Hamilhamah* [War Diary], Vol. I, (Tel Aviv: 1982), p. 22. In fact the Arab inhabitants of the proposed state were estimated by the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine at 400,000, an assessment that failed to take into account the 100,000 Bedouin in the Negev.

3. Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College Archives, Oxford, Cunningham Papers, 1/3/147, "Weekly Intelligence Appreciation." A three-day general strike started on 2 December in protest of the United Nations resolution.

4. Cited in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel* , p. 90.

5. A report by G. J. Jenkins, 30 December 1947, British Embassy, Cairo, PRO, FO 371/68366, E458.

6. The text of Plan May is found in *Sefer Toldot Hahaganah* [The History of the Haganah], Vol. III, Part 3, pp. 1939–43.

7. L. R. Banks, *Torn Country: An Oral History of the Israeli War of Independence* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), p. 110.

8. Cited in Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora* , p. 308.

9. See the text of Plan Dalet, Appendix B, in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no.1 (Autumn 1988), pp. 29–30.

10. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* , Vol. 2, p. 703.

11. Between the Haganah's 20 May 1947 blowing up of an Arab cafe in Fajjah and the Stern Gang's blowing up of the Cairo-Haifa passenger train

(forty Arab civilians killed, sixty injured) in March 1948, more than 90 attacks on Arab villages or civilian targets took place. Most of these attacks did not involve an exchange of fire; they included such terrorist acts as burning cinemas, setting off explosives in market places, spraying bullets into crowds gathered at cafes or in the streets, dynamiting houses with people in them, and so on.

12. Benny Morris, "The Causes and Character of the Arab Exodus from Palestine: The Israel Defence Forces Intelligence Branch Analysis of June 1948," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 1 (January 1986), pp. 5–19. In *1948 and After* , Morris faults the report for "minimiz[ing] the role direct expulsion orders played in bringing about the Palestinian exodus," p. 84.

13. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe* , p. xviii.

14. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* , pp. xiv–xviii.

15. For instance, see Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* , p. 40, and Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe* , p. 41.

16. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. I, entry dated 6 February 1948, p.211; see also Ben-Gurion's statement at the cabinet meeting on 16 June 1948 on p. 525 of Vol. 2; and Morris, *1948 and After* , pp. 39–40.

17. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. I, entry dated 7 February 1948, pp. 210–11. Tom Segev states that Ben-Gurion was referring to the Arab exodus which he welcomed and to the Arab population "whom he expected to leave." Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 25.

18. Ben-Gurion, *Behilahem Yisrael* [As Israel Fought] (Tel Aviv: Mapai Press, 1952), pp. 86–87.

19. Memorandum entitled "Our Arab Policy During the War," in *Giv'at Haviva* , Hashomer Hatza'ir Archives, 10.10.95 (4). The Mapam party was founded in Jerusalem in 1948. Many of its members, such as Yisrael Galili,

Yigal Allon, Yitzhak Rabin, and Moshe Carmel, were commanders in the Haganah.

20. Memorandum to the Political Committee of Mapam, 12 October 1948, Aharon Cohen Personal Archive, Ibid., 11.10.95 (1).

21. Benny Morris, "Yosef Weitz and the Transfer Committees, 1948–49," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 4 (October 1986), p. 523. For further discussion on Weitz's influence in the Yishuv and particularly during the 1948 war period, see Efraim Orni, *Agrarian Reform and Social Progress in Israel* (Jerusalem: 1974), pp. 25–26; *Jewish National Fund Mini Manual* (Jerusalem: 1975), pp. 14–15.

22. Yosef Weitz, *Yomani Veegrotai Lebanim* [My Diary and Letters to the Children], Vol. III (Tel Aviv: 1965), entry for 30 November 1947, p. 201.

23. Ibid., entry dated 7 December 1947, p. 202.

24. Walid Khalidi, "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine," *Middle East Forum* (November 1961), reproduced in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988).

25. Weitz Diary, A 246/12, entry dated 10 January 1948, p. 2288, CZA; Weitz, *Yomani* , Vol. III, entry dated 11 January 1948, p. 226.

26. Weitz Diary, A 246/12, entry dated 12 January 1948, p. 2290, CZA.

27. Benny Morris, "Yosef Weitz and the Transfer Committees, 1948–49," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 4 (October 1986), p. 524.

28. Weitz Diary, A 246/12, entry dated 12 January 1948, p. 2290, CZA.

29. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 20 February 1948, p. 2315, CZA.

30. Ibid., entry dated 29 February 1948, p. 2322.

31. Ibid, entry dated 26 March 1948, p. 2343.

32. Ibid.

33. Weitz, *Yomani* , Vol. III, entry dated 26 April 1948, p. 273.

34. Morris, “Yosef Weitz and the Transfer Committees,” p. 527.

35. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 30 March 1948, p. 2346, CZA.

36. Ibid.

37. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel* , p. 88.

38. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 4 April 1948, p. 2349, CZA.

39. Ibid., entry dated 14 April 1948, p. 2354.

40. Ibid., entry dated 18 April 1948, p. 2358.

41. Ibid., entry dated 28 April 1948, p. 2368.

42. Ibid., entries dated 29 April and 2 May 1948, pp. 2370–72.

43. Ibid., entry dated 3 May 1948, p. 2372.

44. Ibid., entry dated 4 May 1948, pp. 2373–74.

45. E. Danin’s letter to Weitz, dated 18 May 1948, quoted in Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees,” p. 529; Weitz, *Yomani* , Vol. III, entry for 24 May, 1948, p. 291.

46. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 28 May 1948, p. 2403, CZA.

47. Ibid., entry dated 30 May 1948, p. 2405.

48. Ibid., entry dated 31 May 1948, p. 2406.

49. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. II, entry dated 1 June 1948, p. 477.

50. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 5 June, 1948, p. 2411, CZA; Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees,” pp. 531–2; Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. II, entry dated 5 June 1948, p. 487.

51. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 5 June 1948, p. 2411, CZA.

52. Ibid., entries dated 8, 10, and 16 June 1948, pp. 2413, 2415, and 2419, respectively.

53. Shertok’s letter to Danin, dated 16 July 1948, quoted in Ezra Danin, *Tzioni Bekhol Tnai* [A Zionist in All Conditions] (autobiographical articles written by Yaacov Sharett, and edited by Gershon Rivlin), (Jerusalem: Kidum, 1987), vol. I, pp. 239–40.

54. Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees, pp. 533–35.

55. Ibid.

56. Benny Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 1 (1986), p. 91. The question of transferring Arabs from Ramle, Lydda, and Jaffa had been raised as easly as March 1938, during a meeting of the Jewish Agency’s Borders Committee set up in conjunction with the first Transfer Committee. Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine* , p. 170, citing a letter dated 31 March 1938 from Fritz Simon (also a member of the first Transfer Committee) to David Horowitz, then director of the JA’s Economic Department.

57. Minutes of the provisional government, 16 June 1948, cited in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel* , pp. 110 and 252.

58. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* , p. 116, citing Ben-Gurion’s speech of 24 July 1948 at the Mapai center.

59. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. II, entry dated 16 June 1948, pp. 524–26.

60. Ibid.

61. Morris, *1948 and After* , p. 43.

62. Ibid., pp. 43–44.

63. Ibid., pp. 42–43.

64. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. II, entry dated 18 August 1948, pp. 652–4; Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees,” pp. 546–47.

65. Ibid.

66. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. II, p. 654.

67. Cited in Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* , pp. 149–50; Benny Morris, “The Crystalization of Israeli Policy Against a Return of the Arab Refugees: April–December 1948,” in *Studies in Zionism* 6, no. 1 (1985), p. 106.

68. Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees,” p. 547.

69. Weitz Diary, A 246/13, entry dated 29 August 1948, p. 2472, CZA; Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees,” p. 547.

70. Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 59.

71. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. II, entry dated 13 September 1948, p. 683.

72. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. III, entry dated 31 October 1948, p. 788.

73. Ibid., entry dated 26 September 1948, p. 721.

74. See Weitz’s note to Ben-Gurion, dated 30 September 1948, in the Institute for Settlement Research, Rehovot, Weitz’s Papers.

75. Ben-Gurion, *War Diary* , Vol. III, entry dated 26 October 1948, pp. 776–77.

76. Ibid.; Weitz, *Yomani* , Vol. III, entry dated 26 October 1948, p. 349.

77. Morris, “Weitz and the Transfer Committees”; Shabtai Teveth, *Haaretz* , 7 April 1989.

78. Quoted in Danin, *Tzioni Bekhol Tnai* , Vol. I, p. 303.

79. Ibid.

80. European Population Transfers 1939–1945 (1946).

81. Chapter 2, pp. 75–159 of Schechtman’s undated and unpublished transfer plan, the Institute for Settlement Research, Rehovot, in Weitz’s Papers. It appears to have been formulated before the assassination of Count Bernadotte on 17 September 1948 by Lehi.

82. Ibid., pp. 75–76.

83. Ibid., p. 103.

84. Ibid., pp. 124–25, 160.

85. Ibid., p. 156.

86. Ibid., pp. 103–104.

87. Ibid., p. 158.

88. Ibid., pp. 160–61.

89. Ibid., p. 163.

90. From Joseph B. Schechtman to Ezra Danin, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tel Aviv, letter dated 6 December 1948, in A 246/29, CZA.

91. Ibid.; see p. 165.

92. Morris, *1948 and After* , p. 258.

93. The figure 140,000–150,000 is based on a letter from B. Yekoteel, of the Arab affairs advisor's office (in the Prime Minister's Office) to the Foreign Minister's Secretary, 13 May 1953, in Israeli State Archives, Foreign Ministry, 2402/23b.

94. Danin, *Tzioni Bekhol Tnai* , Vol I, p. 310.

Conclusion

With the 1948 war, the Zionists succeeded many of their objectives; if they did not have a homogenous Jewish state, at least they had one in which the "non-Jewish" community was reduced to a manageable minority. The notion of transfer or expulsion was heatedly denied, and the evacuation of some 730,000 Palestinians was officially ascribed not to the culmination of Zionist policy but to orders issued by Arab armies. The long debates about transfer within the Jewish Agency and other top Zionist leadership bodies—where for the most part the issue was not morality but feasibility, and where "liberals" were distinguished from "hardliners" (to use today's terminology) by whether they favored "voluntary" or "compulsory" transfer—were seemingly forgotten. Pushed to the background, too, were the tireless preparations such as those of Joseph Weitz and the "transfer committees" within the Jewish Agency aimed at bringing about the "miraculous clearing of the land" that took place in 1948.

As we have seen, the notion of transfer was born almost at the same time as political Zionism itself, with Herzl's hope to "spirit the penniless population across the border." The desire to have a Land of Israel unencumbered by a native population was a constant in Zionist thought, but it was tempered with a great deal of pragmatism on the part of the Zionist leadership and even at times considerable skepticism as to its practicability. Transfer as a seriously discussed option ebbed and flowed, receding to the background when the Yishuv felt itself vulnerable or when other priorities commanded attention, thrust to the forefront with the gathering strength of the Yishuv or when external events seemed to favor it. Thus, as the early hopes that the native population would soon "fold their tents and steal away" gave way to awareness of the fierce Palestinian attachment to the land, talk of transfer

dwindled to intermittent almost offhanded efforts or references more in the nature of trial balloons. It was not until the mid-1930s that the rapidly shifting balance of power in favor of the Yishuv, thanks to greatly accelerating immigration, spurred the Zionist leadership to canvass actively, albeit discreetly, for detailed schemes of Arab evacuation. The greatest surge of activity was spawned by the Royal (Peel) Commission's recommendation—made largely at Zionist instigation, as we have seen—of partition and compulsory transfer as a solution to the Palestine problem. It is significant that the intensified planning for and discussions of transfer were accompanied by Haganah's "great leap forward" in terms of military force and organization, and the increasing though generally unstated association between transfer and military prowess.

The evacuation of the great majority of the Palestinian population in 1948 took place against the background of war and military campaigns; it was a time during which opportunities, as Weitz exhorted his countrymen, were not missed. The fact that no written blanket orders unambiguously calling for the wholesale expulsion of the Arab population have been found has been cited as indicating the absence of premeditated design; in similar vein, the inconsistencies in the behaviors of the various field commanders are given as proof that the exodus was born of the exigencies of war. But the exodus was not the less the result of painstaking planning and an unswerving vision: if this volume has shown anything, it is the tenacity of a shared understanding, stated and restated with almost tedious repetitiveness for almost 50 years. The exodus is nothing if not testimony to the endurance of a vision that runs in an unbroken line from the early days of Zionist colonization to this day.

For the concept of transfer did not die with the creation of the State of Israel and the realization of a large part of Zionist goals. The idea continued to percolate, carried forward by various schemes (some of them spearheaded by the indefatigable Weitz), which lie beyond the scope of the present work. The idea has been considerably revived since the acquisition of what remained of Mandatory Palestine, with its solidly Palestinian population, during the 1967 war. Over 200,000 Palestinians were driven or transported across the Jordan River in the wake of that war, and transfer ideas were immediately put forward. Moreover, while prior to the creation of the state

the issue of transfer was discussed primarily behind closed doors, in the inner sanctums of the highest leadership bodies, in recent years it has become the province of newspapers and public political speeches. Thus, leading figures of the Israeli politico-military establishment have openly pronounced themselves in favor of mass expulsion of the Palestinians, particularly from the occupied territories. Certain Likud politicians, including Knesset members and ministers (Meir Cohen, Michael Dekel, Ariel Sharon) have outwardly criticized the hypocrisy of Labor politicans, lamenting their failure to act consistently with Ben-Gurion's policies of 1948 during the confusion of the 1967 war and thus spare the country the Arab "demographic problem." Rehav'am Zeevi heads a party that holds two Knesset seats and whose platform is devoted to the mass expulsion of the Palestinians. The issue of transfer frequently figures in public opinion polls, sometimes in such terms as "would you support transfer as a means of safeguarding the democratic values of Israel?" In some of these polls, close to 50 percent of the population have shown themselves not averse to transfer. Transfer has become a permissible if not entirely respectable subject of debate.

To be sure, large segments of the Israeli public oppose the notion of transfer and criticize those who hold such views. It is tempting to dismiss the revival of transfer as an acceptable solution to the "Arab problem" as the wild ravings of right-wing extremists. Such a dismissal is dangerous, however, and it is well to be reminded that the concept of transfer lies at the very heart of mainstream Zionism. As Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary on 12 July 1937: "the compulsory transfer of the Arabs from the valleys of the projected Jewish state...we have to stick to this conclusion the same way we grabbed the Balfour Declaration, more than that, the same way we grabbed at Zionism itself." * This is what was done. A greater understanding of this background to 1948 is important for preventing the repetition of a tragic history.

* Ben-Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs], Vol. 4, p. 299.

Glossary

Ahdut Ha'avodah (Hebrew for "Union of Labor") Zionist Socialist party founded in 1919 in Palestine; it merged in 1930 with Hapo'el Hatza'ir* to form Mapai*.

Balfour Declaration Official statement dated 2 November 1917 expressing British support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...." The declaration was communicated in a letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Lionel Walter Rothschild (2d Baron Rothschild), a leader of British Jewry.

Basle Program Program adopted at the First Zionist Congress held in Basle in 1897, stating that the objective of the Zionist movement was "to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured under public law."

Brit Shalom Zionist organization founded in Palestine in 1925 that espoused the cause of a binational state. Judah Magnes and Martin Buber were among its leaders; other leading members advocated transfer of the Palestinians.

"Conquest of Labor" (in Hebrew: "Kibbush 'Avodah") Doctrine advocated by Hapo'el Hatza'ir* that emphasized the importance of Jewish labor in Palestine. The doctrine developed in response to increased reliance by Jewish settlements on Arab workers by the time of the Second Aliyah (1904–1914).

"Conquest of Land" (in Hebrew: "Kibbush Ha'adamah") Doctrine complementing the more comprehensive "Conquest of Labor"*; it specifically advocated acquiring Palestinian land for use by Jews engaged in all branches of agricultural work.

Haganah (Hebrew for "Defense") Mainstream Zionist paramilitary organization that was founded in Palestine in 1920, later becoming the regular army of the state of Israel.

Hapo'el Hatza'ir (Hebrew for "The Young Worker") Labor Zionist organization founded in 1905 by immigrants from the Second Aliyah, it merged in 1930 with Ahdut Ha'avodah* to form Mapai*.

Hope-Simpson Report Report commissioned by the British government and submitted by Sir John Hope-Simpson in October 1930, which found that there was no room for substantial numbers of Jewish settlers on the land of Palestine.

Inner Actions Committee See World Zionist Organization.

Irgun Tzvai Leumi (IZL) (Hebrew for "National Military Organization) Jewish underground armed group formed in 1931 by Revisionist* Zionist leaders, and headed from 1943–48 by Menahem Begin.

Jewish Agency (JA) Expanded body established by the World Zionist Organization* in 1929, including Zionist and non-Zionist leaders throughout the world, for the purpose of cooperating with the British mandatory authorities to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine. Gradually, the JA and WZO became legally and structurally identical.

Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) One of many Jewish colonization organizations, it was founded in 1891 by Baron Maurice de Hirsch, and bought land, provided agricultural training, and contributed to settlement economies.

Jewish National Fund (JNF) (in Hebrew: "Keren Kayemet le-Yisrael") Established in 1901 as the land acquisition and administration arm of the World Zionist Organization, on the understanding that the land bought could be neither sold nor mortgaged, remaining in perpetual trust for the Jewish people.

Mapai (acronym for: "Mifleget Po'alei Eretz Yisrael") Israeli Socialist Zionist Party created in 1930 by the merger of Ahdut Ha'avodah* and Hapo'el Hatza'ir* with a pragmatic socialist agenda. It was later transformed into the Israeli Labor Party.

Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA) Zionist colonization company established in 1924 as an organization separate from its parent group, the Jewish Colonization Association* (ICA), whose work it continued by aiding settlements and promoting industrial enterprises.

Palestine Land Development (in Hebrew: Hevrat Hachsharat Hayishuv) Land purchasing and development company founded in 1908 by the World Zionist Organization* to acquire land for the Jewish National Fund* (JNF) and for individuals.

Passfield White Paper Official statement of British government policy on Palestine issued in October 1930 by Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) and based on the findings of the Hope-Simpson Report*

Peel Commission British government commission under Viscount Peel that visited Palestine between November 1936 and January 1937, issuing a report (Royal Commission Report) in July 1937 that recommended partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and British mandatory enclaves, as well as forcible transfer, if necessary, of the Palestinian population out of the Jewish state.

Plan Dalet Comprehensive operational plan finalized in March 1948 by the Haganah* for the military conquest of all areas designated as falling within the boundaries of the Jewish state by the UN General Assembly partition resolution of 1947, as well as areas beyond those boundaries.

Revisionists (full name: "Union of Zionists-Revisionists," in Hebrew: "Ha-Tzohar") Zionist party founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1925 with maximalist political aims, including the establishment of a state with a Jewish majority in the entire mandated territory on both sides of the Jordan River.

Royal Commission Report See Peel Commission.

Shaw Report British commission of inquiry named in September 1929 to investigate the August clashes between Palestinians and Jews. The commission's report, issued in March 1930 attributed the clashes to the fact that "the Arabs have come to see in Jewish immigration not only a menace to their livelihood but a possible overlord of the future," and recommended the inquiry which led to the Hope-Simpson Report*.

Va'ad Leumi (Hebrew for "National Council") Executive organ of the Elected Assembly of Jews in Palestine between October 1920 and May

1948, operating under British mandatory law as official representative of the Yishuv*.

White Paper of 1939 Statement on British policy on Palestine issued in May 1939, as an alternative to the Peel Commission* plan, which was found impracticable. It advocated the establishment within ten years of a unitary Palestinian state where Jews and Arabs would share government based on proportional representation.

Woodhead Commission Technical commission on partition which issued a report in November 1938 finding that the Peel Commission's recommendation of partition was demographically and economically impracticable.

World Zionist Organization (WZO) Official organization of the international Zionist movement founded in 1897 at the First Zionist Congress at Basle. The Zionist Congress is the supreme forum and legislative body of the WZO and the Zionist Executive (until 1921 the Inner Actions Committee) implements its decisions.

Yishuv (Hebrew for "Settlement") Jewish community in Palestine prior to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

Zionist Executive See World Zionist Organization.

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